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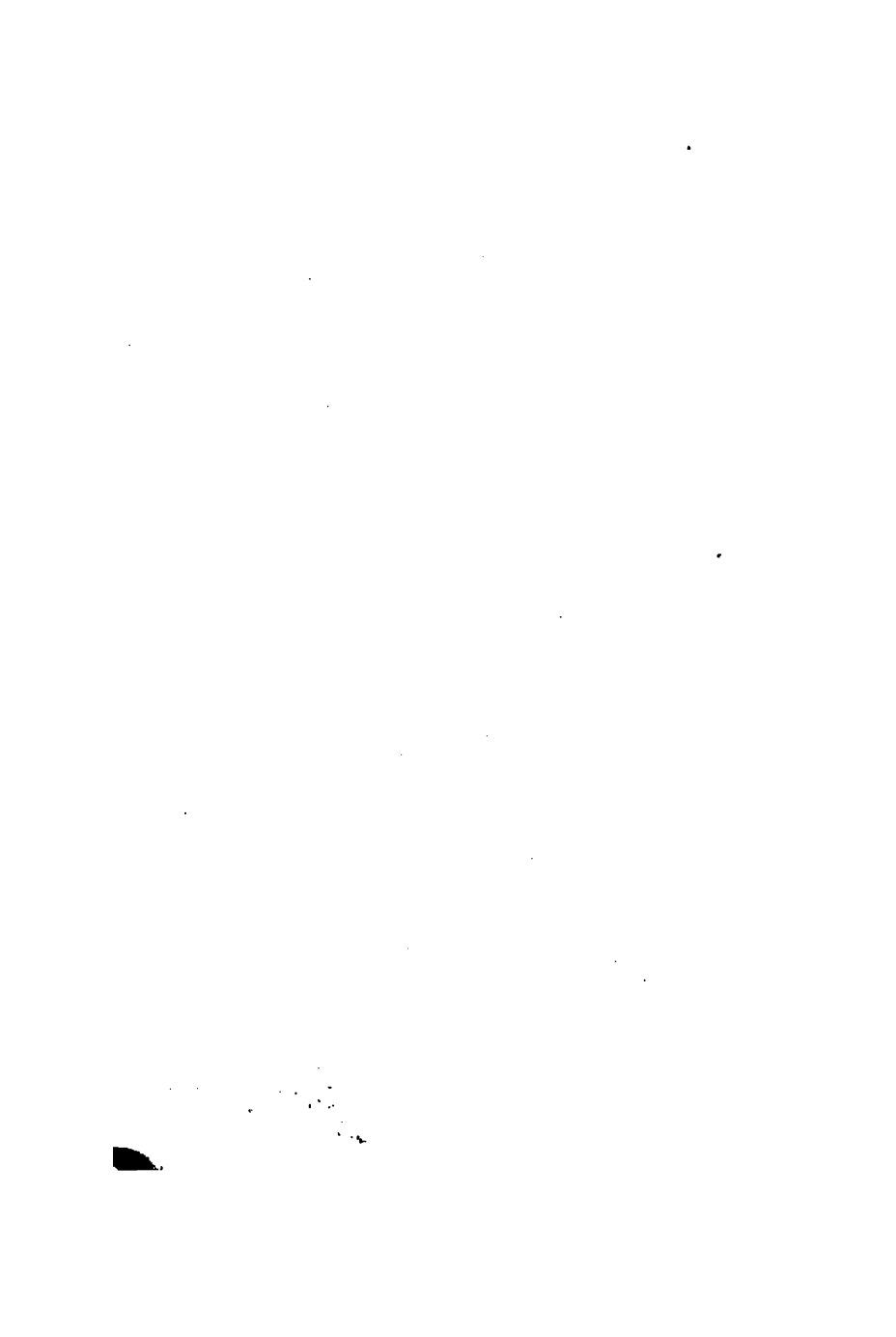


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MONASTIC INSTITUTIONS.





Monastic Institutions ;
THEIR ORIGIN, PROGRESS, NATURE
AND TENDENCY.

BY SAMUEL PHILLIPS DAY,
Formerly of the Order of the Presentation.



LONDON :
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN AND LONGMANS.

1855.



110. cl. 426.



TO
THOMAS CHAMBERS, ESQ. M.P.
ETC.
THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE
INSCRIBED.



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ERRATA.

Page 58, note, for Ivo of Charles, read, Ivo of Chartres.	
" 83, line 22, for their code, " its code.	
" 91, " 19, " their immediate wants, read, im- mediate wants.	
" 94, line 23, for becoming, read, became.	
" 141, " 22, " temporarily, " temporary.	
" 205, " 3, " have, " has.	
" 223, " 12, " to that " from that.	
" 227, " 18, " there production, " the reproduction.	



PREFACE.

THE least said the soonest mended," is an apophthegm, the applicability of which is not at all out of place in the present instance. Prefaces, generally speaking, so far from being ornamental are rather detrimental to a book ; sometimes, like doctors' physic, they are " necessary evils ;" but in nine cases out of ten they had much better be dispensed with altogether ; for even should the book itself happen to be *lucid*, like men

with diamonds writing on glafs, they obscure light with scratches. However, following the example of moralifts, ~~we~~ depart (in our cafe unwillingly) from the very excellent principle which we recommend to others; and venture to fay a few words to the reader.

As brevity is not only “the foul of wit,” but in this particular cafe, a matter of duty, I fhall abide by that rule, and not needlessly occupy the time and attention of thofe who may better and more profitably difpofe of both one and the other.

My principal object in writing this book has been to meet what I conceive to be a defideratum, by furnifhing a faithful, impartial, and *unfeftarian*, however imperfect, view of the monaftic fyftem of ancient and modern times.

Works of this description too often are either not fit to be placed in the hands of female readers, or else are highly exaggerated and prejudiced, and consequently mar the purpose they were designed to serve. I have carefully endeavoured, “to the end of the chapter,” to abstain from the least appearance of acrimony or invective which the discussion of such an exciting topic was calculated to provoke; and have avoided as much as possible the theological, or rather *polemical* examination of the subject; simply and fairly treating it as a rational and philosophical question, to my mind the most interesting and instructive light in which it could possibly be regarded—always bearing in mind that “to suppress the truth may now and then be our duty to others; whilst not

to utter a falsehood must always be our duty to ourselves."*

Having attempted to give a condensed view of Monastic Institutions, I trust that the brevity I have found needful to adopt does not necessarily involve obscurity; for I should very much regret were the proverb in the remotest degree applicable to me, "*Brevis esse laboro, obscurus fio.*" The size of the book precluded a more enlarged view of the interesting subject which has occupied my pen, and I was unwilling to swell the volume to a larger extent, however valuable the *matériel* at my disposal. My chief object has been to direct public attention to facts, not so much as to multiply cases, illus-

* Guesses at Truth.

trative of the monastic system. The end will be attained if the few pages of this unassuming book should induce the reader to regard the same in its proper light, and to examine more thoughtfully, attentively, and minutely, its entire ramifications and the effects which it is calculated to produce in the world no less than in the cloister. There are, no doubt, defects of composition, for which I must throw myself on the indulgence of the reader.

As to the numerous authorities brought forward in support of the positions I have laid down, I can truly say, that they have not been quoted, without a strict attention to the very words of the several authors to whom reference is made. I would further add, that in an attempt to draw a picture of

the abuses which have, age after age, crept into the monastic system, until it became an unsightly mass of deformity, I have cautiously avoided setting down aught in malice, or magnifying errors and abominations, in themselves sufficiently gross without any additional colouring.

I now stand at the bar of public opinion ; and while I anticipate the candid and impartial judgment of those whose opinion is worthy of respect, I am at the same time prepared to encounter severe and caustic criticism at the hands of some who have not the judgment or justice to discriminate, nor the humanity nor charity to distinguish, between the rabidness of sectarianism on the one hand, and the moderation of an unprejudiced Author on the other, when

Monastic Institutions form the theme upon which he discoursed.—“*Il y a bien quelque chose là dedans que je ne comprends pas.*”

London :
May, 1855.





Monastic Institutions.

CHAPTER I.

The Origin and Progress of Monasticism.

“Rude ideas, barbarous society, Egyptian superstition, and the Roman Catholic Religion, solve all the errors of monachism.”—T. D. FOSEBROOKE.



WHEN we trace Monachism to its source, we discover that it originated with the early converts to christianity who, powerfully instigated by fanaticism, as well as influenced by the dread of persecution, abandoned their ordinary avocations, and betook themselves for safety and retirement to the mountains, the solitary deserts, and even the gloomy caverns of the earth.

During the severe and protracted persecutions which followed the edicts of the em-

peror Diocletian, doubtless many individuals, of both sexes, embraced with avidity the ascetic life, in order to escape from the dire calamities which threatened to overwhelm them. Hence, the barren wilderness afforded a refuge, where the darts of the enemy could not penetrate, and a haven, where the storms of adversity could not reach.

Egypt, within whose prolific womb superstition had been conceived, and upon whose breasts it was nourished and matured, affords the first example of strict monastic life, in the celebrated hermit, Anthony, who was born at Coba, on the borders of Arcadia, A.D. 251. This extraordinary enthusiast deserted the spot of his nativity, and at first sought a habitation within the ruins of a tower. Subsequently he dwelt among the tombs, where he is said to have performed rigorous penances and mortifications. Having, however, travelled into the desert a few days' journey eastward of the Nile, and discovering in that locality a spot possessing a wildness of scenery peculiarly adapted to his romantic tastes, and convenient to a spring of water—a consideration of no slight import—he fixed his final habitation upon Mount Colzim, adjacent to the Red Sea, A.D. 305, where he

Their Origin and Progress. 3

collected an associated community,* and where it is said, by the Jesuit Sicard,† an ancient monastery still retains his name.

One of Anthony's sayings was, that "He who abideth in solitude is delivered from the threefold warfare of hearing, speaking and seeing, and has only to support the combat against his own heart." His actual experience nevertheless entirely negatives this assertion; for so difficult, nay, impossible did he find it to sustain such a combat, that in an hour of trial and distress he cried to the Lord, asking how he should be saved? "Presently," says the legend, "he saw one in the likeness of himself, who sat at work, and anon rose from his work and prayed, and then sat down again to twist a rope of the fibres of the palm, and after a while, rose and prayed again. It was the angel of the Lord. 'Do this,' said the angel, 'and thou shalt be saved.'"

Although it has been affirmed and believed by the ancients, as well as the moderns, that Anthony was grossly ignorant, yet the historian Tillemont considers this statement to be unfounded, and describes him as being ac-

* Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. vol. i. p. 281. (Soames.)

† Missions in the Levant.

quainted with reading and writing in the Coptic, his native tongue, and only ignorant as respects his knowledge of the Greek. Even the philosopher Synisius eulogises the natural genius of Anthony, and asserts "that he did not require the aid of learning."

Upon this bleak and isolated mountain Anthony did not exist unknown, although apparently debarred from all human intercourse and interests. Nor was he without followers and admirers. Numberless individuals, whom natural curiosity alone had drawn to the spot, were ultimately induced to make trial of his novel mode of life; and having once embraced it, they soon experienced a dislike for society, and remained in solitude until they had lost all appetite or aptitude for social life. Thus monachism, like many other great institutions, may clearly be traced to accidental circumstances. On the Mount of Colzim the first seeds of monachism were sown; they quickly germinated; and their rapid and surprising growth must astonish every rational and intelligent mind. The rocks of Thebais, the sands of Libya, the cities of the Nile, and the mountains and desert of Nitria, were, in an incredibly short time, thickly peopled by several thousand

Their Origin and Progress. 5

anchorites ; and travellers have observed the ruins of fifty monasteries which were established in these places by Anthony and his disciples. The Jesuit Sicard visited this desert, and discovered there four monastic establishments, and about twenty or thirty monks. Anthony's disciples finally dispersed themselves over the Ethiopian empire.

There is a curious circumstance related of one Ammon, who persuaded his wife to renounce with him a secular life. They accordingly retired to the mountain of Nitria, and for a time inhabited together one common ascetic apartment. This not being pleasing, however, to the chaste bride, she manifested some uneasiness thereat, and one day addressed her husband thus :—" It is unsuitable for you, who profess chastity, to look upon a woman in so confined a dwelling ; let us, therefore, if it is agreeable to you, perform our exercise apart." The concurrence of Ammon was obtained, and each party passed the remainder of their lives in solitude and abstinence ; partaking neither of wine or oil, eating dry bread alone, and occasionally refraining from food for several days together. At one time Ammon required to cross a river, but being so squeam-

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ishly modest as not to undress, he besought the Lord to enable him to get over without being necessitated to break his resolution. Immediately, it is said, an angel transported him to the opposite side ! *

The island of Tabenne, in the Nile, situated between the modern town of Girge and the ruins of ancient Thebes, was inhabited by Pachomius, and about fourteen hundred of his disciples. This devotee, in order that he might sleep little, and with the least possible comfort or convenience, never once suffered himself to lie down, or to recline against anything which might afford his body support, but sat upon a stone in the centre of his cell. And among the rules which, according to monkish biographers, were given to him by an angel, and became the first code of monastic laws, was one whereby the members of that order were enjoined to sleep in a sitting and not in a recumbent position. This renowned abbot founded nine monasteries for men, and, cruel to relate, one for women ! Frequently on festival days would be congregated together as many as fifty thousand individuals who adopted his singularly austere and rigid rule of discipline.

* Socrates' Eccles. Hist. lib. 4, c. xxiii.

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Impelled both by the example of Anthony and his own innate love for solitude, Hilarion, a Syrian youth, established monachism in Palestine, A. D. 328, and took up his abode upon a sandy beach, a few miles distant from Gaza. Soon did the fame of this man become commensurate with, if it did not positively surpass, that of Anthony : for, when on his occasional visitation of the several monasteries in Palestine, he was invariably accompanied by a vast procession, comprising no less than two or three thousand anchorites. This founder prosecuted a course of severe discipline during a period of forty-eight years.

In Rome, monachism was first introduced and propagated by Athanasius, A. D. 341, and a few Egyptian monks, whose revolting and horrifying aspect created, for a time, contempt and ridicule. Strange to say, however, these feelings ultimately subsided, and gave place to emulation and esteem.

The celebrated and ambitious Basil established a monastery in Pontus, A. D. 366, in a dreary solitude, where he governed for a time his followers, who were dispersed along the coast of the Black Sea.

Martin of Tours, who united in himself rather the conflicting offices of a warrior and

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christian bishop, founded several monastic societies in Gaul, A.D. 370. His disciples numbered several thousands; many of whom chose for their place of exile the bleak and rugged islands which lie studded over the Tuscan Sea.

The monks belonging to the famous monastery of Bangor, founded by one *Congal*, A.D. 530, who were three thousand in number, dispersed themselves over Ireland, Gaul, Germany, Switzerland, and the whole northern regions.* Thus we behold a system hateful in the sight of God, in rude contradiction to the principles of Nature, revolting to the social feelings and inimical to the happiness of mankind, spreading itself over the earth, and in its flight carrying ruin and desolation in its unsightly train.

* Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 21. (Soames.)



CHAPTER II.

Causes of the rapid Increase of Monasticism— Mode of Living, Vows, and Wealth of the early Monks.

“ Fanaticism will ever have success. It treats upon a subject where there is a general feeling and interest; and acts by operating upon Passion, which is always contagious and intelligible; because the sensations of all mankind are similar, though their understandings may differ.”—*Preface to British Monachism.*



THE causes which have operated in producing the rapid spread of monachism, may clearly be traced to a threefold source: namely, fanaticism, example, and sinister ends. Almost all religious sects have begun among the illiterate and common people. From this class chiefly have been drawn their earliest as well as most numerous proselytes. “ The austere system of morality,” says Adam Smith, “ has been adopted by

these sects almost constantly, or with very few exceptions, for there have been some. It was the system by which they could best recommend themselves to that order of people, to whom they first proposed their plan of reformation, upon what had been before established. Many, perhaps the greater part of them, have even endeavoured to gain credit, by refining upon this austere system, and by carrying it to some degree of folly and extravagance; and this excessive rigour has frequently recommended them, more than anything else, to the respect and veneration of the common people."* Whenever reason remains uncultivated, a passion for the marvellous obtains amongst a people; and fanaticism readily assumes any, even the most grotesque shape. The history of religions but too truly and painfully testifies this. Now, in the earlier middle age, when christianity itself was very considerably extended by means of the sword and by the reception of baptism exempting prisoners of war from slavery or death;† in such an age, surely, pure reason would have been quite unavailing.

* *Wealth of Nations*, iii. p. 202.

† *Solorzano de Indiarum Jure*, lib. ii. ch. xvi. p. 263.

A noble mind is not even proof against the spirit of fanaticism, when once it succeeds in insinuating itself into it. The vital principles of virtue and truth become inevitably corroded thereby. Nor are we to be greatly surprised at the fanaticism of the past, when we know that even pious frauds continued to the days of Fox, the historian, who published in his "Book of Martyrs," the barbarous murder of individuals who were known to have lived long after.

The manner in which example operated upon the uncultivated minds of the multitude may readily be conceived, when we consider the surprising popularity which the first founders and promulgators of this new system had attained. The spread of their apparently extraordinary miracles, and successful combatings with evil spirits, must have had a powerful tendency to induce persons, in the slightest degree credulous, to embrace a state, to all human appearance, so specially and signally stamped with the seal of Heaven. Further, each proselyte was taught that pleasure was destruction ; that mortification was the sole means of acquiring the Divine favour, and avoiding temporal misfortunes ;* and

* Anglia Sacr. i. 797.

that a world voluntarily renounced, was the spiritual ladder by means of which they were to ascend to the gates of Zion. The eloquent Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople, who had himself exchanged the monastic habit for the episcopal crown, encouraged the monks to believe that they were the "elect;" and that the monastic cell was a type of the ark, "out of which salvation was impossible." He even dedicated no less than three books in eulogy of the monastic life; but ultimately he received a poor reward for his ill-bestowed panegyrics. Those very individuals, upon whom he lavished such undue praises, became his most bitter and adverse enemies, and were the special instruments in procuring his perpetual banishment to Cucusus, a city of Cilicia, where he died about three years afterwards.* Thus was Chrysostom rewarded for his adulatory epistles, by the black-garbled monks of Cappadocia.

Sinister ends and personal motives likewise were not without their effects in peopling the inhabitable deserts and barren wilds with multitudes of people; for hither, as to a common asylum, men broken in mind, in fortune,

* Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. vol. i. p. 470. (Soames.)

and in fame, betook themselves ; the friendless, the disappointed, the criminal who fled from public justice, and the innocent who sought shelter from oppression.* Vanity, the spirit of emulation, accidental misfortune, and even ambition, acted as strong incentives to the monastic state. Indeed, instances are recorded of the emaciated and austere monk being suddenly endowed with the highest civil authority, as well as elevated to the episcopal chair ; and it is notorious that the monasteries of the east, of Egypt, and of Gaul, supplied numerous candidates for these dignified offices.† Nothing can well afford such a striking and remarkable proof of the excessive and fanatical veneration that was paid to the monastic order, as the treatment they received from several kings and emperors, who drew numbers of monks and abbots from their cloisters, and placed them in stations entirely foreign to their vows and their character ; even amidst the splendour of a court, and at the head of affairs. The

* Platina has termed the monastic life, “ *Unicum calamitosorum refugium.* ”

† Sulpitius Severus, *De Vita Martini*, cap. x. p. 320, Dial. i. cap. xxi. p. 426.

transition, indeed, was violent, from the obscurity of a convent, and the study of a liturgy, to sit at the helm of an empire and manage the political interests of nations.* Hence, it may safely be affirmed, that sinister views and interested motives gave a sweetness to mortification, an agreeableness to solitude, and an intrepidity to the mind, divested of which influences, many of those unhappy beings would, in all probability, have yielded to despair, and put a termination to an existence at best but a living death. Several fled to monastic retreats whose circumstances became embarrassed by oppression; and a vast number of individuals, whom the horrors of war had intimidated, found a most desirable refuge in these asylums. They were content to endure privations painful to flesh and blood, which the fear of perishing by ruthless barbarians could alone have alleviated or rendered supportable.

The cells or dwellings of the monks were originally low and narrow,—unlike the fine spacious apartments of our modern recluse,—and built of slight materials: while the more devoted of their occupants, in order to in-

* Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 201. (Soames.)

crease their sufferings, would not afford themselves space sufficient to stand erect, or to extend their bodies, thinking it a meritorious duty to pass their days and nights in a sitting posture.

The Egyptian monks generally carried their abstemiousness to a very great extent. Anthony, Pachomius, and their disciples, would take no more than twelve ounces of bread, or biscuit, for their daily sustenance, which limited quantity was divided into two meals. Mecarius, of Alexandria, partook of no food during Lent but herbs, and then only once a week. This faintly fanatic having one day killed a gnat which had bitten him, was so struck with compunction at the sight of the insect's blood that, by way of atonement, he retired into the marshes, where, for six months, he voluntarily exposed himself to all winged and creeping insects, until every part of his flesh became literally swollen and ulcerated from their bites ! Sozomen relates of him, that he had so hardened his body by austerities, that the very beard could not penetrate through his skin. This personage, when in the full odour of filth and rags, returned one day to his convent, humbled and mortified by the sense of his own inferiority,

exclaiming, "I am not yet a monk, but I have seen monks"—for he had positively fallen in with two of these wretches *stark naked!** In Pontus, as Gregory of Nazianzus testifies, some devotees fasted twenty days and nights together. Paul, the first hermit, is said to have lived upon the fruit of a palm-tree, and a piece of bread supplied to him daily by a raven; which quantity this considerate creature doubled on one occasion when Anthony visited him. The cause of Anthony's visit to Paul is rather remarkable: fancying himself to be the most rigid and retired of all monks, Anthony became exceedingly humbled upon being told in a dream that there existed a better even than he, who resided farther in the wilderness. Accordingly, Anthony sets out on a voyage of discovery and goes in search of Paul's habitation, which was contiguous to some ruins that had been, as the legend states, the mint of Egypt during the time of Antony and Cleopatra. Meeting no other persons on the way than a satyr and a centaur, he arrived at the cave and saw an hyena go in. Paul

* *Peregrinatorium Religiosum*, by T. D. Folbrooke, A.M., F.A.S.

hearing a human footstep closed the portal; but Anthony entreated that the holy man, who had allowed a beast to enter, would not exclude a brother. Overcome by some half-dozen hours' perseverance on the part of his visitor, the hermit removed the stone and asked Anthony, why it was that he had taken so much trouble to see a poor decayed old man, who would speedily return to dust? The next question was a natural one—how the affairs of the world were going on? *Narra mihi quæso, quomodo se habeat hominum genus? An in antiquis urbibus nova tecta consurgant? quo mundus regatur imperio? an supersint aliqui qui dæmonum errore rapiantur?* However, Anthony is sent back to fetch a cloak which Athanasius had given him, and in which his new friend desires to be buried. On his return to the cave, he is apprised of Paul's death by seeing his soul ascend to glory: he finds the deceased hermit on his knees, his body erect, his hands, head, and eyes upraised in the attitude of prayer, and two lions attending as grave-diggers. Anthony buried him in the cave; from whence his remains were translated, first to Constantinople, secondly to Venice, and finally to Buda, where La Brocquiere saw it in a state of

perfect preservation four hundred years ago !*

The use of vegetables, cheese, fruit, or fish, was rarely indulged in by the oriental monks ; but on particular occasions, their abbots mitigated the extreme austerity of the rules, by allowing them the use of the small fish of the Nile ; a luxury which was had at the banquet to which Cassian was invited by Serenus, an Egyptian abbot.

Besides the devotees already alluded to, mention is made of St. Hilary having subsisted upon fifteen figs a-day for a number of years. And more modern accounts affirm that St. Genovefa, of Paris, lived thirty-five years upon a small quantity of barley-bread daily—that St. Catherine, of Cardonna, in Spain, a nun of the Carmelite order, existed solely upon grass ! while others, even in our own country, are said to have sustained life by partaking daily of the “ wafer ”—a pretty demonstrable proof of the “ real presence ” of something more substantial than the mere scholastic *accidents* of bread remaining after the “ *Hoc est corpus meum* ” of the priestly functionary.†

* Pereg. Relig. &c. &c.

† Luther relates that when at Rome he found priests in

Among the Western monks, the rules of Columbanus were the most severe, being nearly as rigorous as those of their brethren in the East. In Seville, the monastic constitutions of Isidore were very lenient, and permitted the use of flesh-meat occasionally. So great, however, did the relaxation in monastic discipline become, that the famous founder of the Benedictines was finally compelled to allow a Roman measure of wine, called *hemina* (equal to half-a-pint), daily to the monks;*

the consecration of the wafer, while telling the people that they were creating God, using the words, "*Tu es panis, et panis manebis.*" "Thou art bread, and bread thou shalt remain!"—*D'Aubigné's Hist. Reform.*

In the preface to Archbishop Wake's Discourse of the Holy Eucharist, it is related that Archbishop Usher, who had converted by his agency some Romish priests, once inquired of them, What they who said mass daily, and were not obliged to confess venial sins, could have to trouble confessors with? They ingenuously acknowledged that the chief part of their constant confession was *their own infidelity* as to the tenet of Transubstantiation: for which they mutually quitted and absolved one another.

* "Every one," saith St. Benedict, "hath his proper gift from God, one thus, and another thus, and therefore we appoint the measure of other men's food not without some scrupulosity. Yet, considering the imbecility of the infirm, we think a *hemina* of wine daily will suffice for each. And if either labour, heat of summer, or the situation of the place, require more, let the prior do what he thinketh good, hav-

and those of his disciples who crossed the Alps, the Rhine, and the Baltic, required a still stronger beverage, and in more ample quantity. It is true that Pachomius ultimately extended the dietary of the monks; but, as a *quid pro quo*, he made them work in proportion.

Monastics were very tenacious of keeping inviolable their vows of evangelical poverty and obedience. The former appeared most prominently in their exterior; for their habit or tunic, which was worn as an outside covering, consisted of the coarsest and cheapest material; and except in the East, where the article was far from expensive, they never indulged in the luxury of linen. Not unfrequently even did the skins of beasts constitute their only attire. By their vow of obedience they imposed upon themselves the shackles of perpetual vassalage and the vilest servitude. Accordingly, they yielded readily and blindly to the most capricious dictates of

ing ever a care that *superfluity* or *drunkenness* creep not in. And although we read wine to be in no sort the drink of monks, yet, *because in these times they will not be so persuaded*, let us at least consent to this; that we drink not to satiety, but sparingly."—*Trans. of the Rules of St. Benedict*, by C. F., *Priest of the Order*, edit. Douay, 1638.

those whom they were bound to obey, no matter how impracticable or preposterous.

As an illustration of the punctiliouſness with which the vow of poverty was regarded, I ſhall relate a ſtory which St. Gregory mentions as having occurred in his own monaſtery :—A monk of the name of Juſtus had amaffed a large ſum of money, amounting to *three crowns*, for his own uſe. Ultimately his fin was diſcovered. However, by the ſingular induſtry of Gregory, he was brought to repent of his cupidity on his death-bed. As an example to others, the ſaint ordered the poor monk's body and his money to be buried together in a dunghill, and forbade prayers to be read for his ſoul. At length Gregory repented of his harſh treatment to his poor deceased brother ! and calling Pretorius, the prior of the convent, deſired him to ſay maſſes for Juſtus for thirty days in ſucceſſion. When this time had tranſpired, the dead man appeared to brother Copioſus, and told him, that he had indeed been in a very bad ſtate, but he was then quite well, as he had that day received the communion !

Nor were theſe wretched beings exempted from more rigid diſcipline and additional penances. The moſt trivial fault, or imperfec-

tion, was punished with extreme rigour and severity ; rendering the offender subject to long fastings, and watchings, solitary confinement, and perhaps flagellation. In the West, the rules of Columbanus, which are said to have surpassed all others in simplicity and brevity, inflicted no less than one hundred lashes for faults of a character so trivial, that they could not be mentioned without exciting the risibility of the reader !* But there were cruelties more abhorrent and diabolical than these practised by abbots ; such as mutilating their monks, and putting out their eyes ; and an instance is recorded of an abbess cutting the nose off each nun in her convent with a razor !† However barbarous these acts may appear, the inhuman *vade in pace*, or subterranean dungeon, more recently invented, far exceeded all other instruments of torture.

Sometimes, however, self-mutilation was adopted, as in the case of Ammonius, who travelled to Rome with Athanasius, and who, when about to be elevated to the episcopate, voluntarily cut off his right ear, in order that

* Jac. Usserii Sylloge. Antiquar. Epistolar. Hibernicar. Holstenii Codex Regularum, tom. ii.

† *Vide* Alban Butler's Lives of the Saints.

he might thereby disqualify himself for ordination. Evagrius, whom Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, wished to force the prelacy upon, having effected his escape without in any way maiming himself, afterwards chanced to meet Ammonius and jocosely observed, that he had done wrong in cutting off his ear, and consequently had rendered himself criminal in the sight of God: to whom Ammonius replied:—"But do you think, Evagrius, that you will escape unpunished, who, from self-love, have cut out your own tongue, to avoid the exercise of that gift of utterance which has been committed to you?"*

Not only was flagellation frequently resorted to by the members of monastic corporations, but a new order was originated in Italy, A.D. 1263, and called by the name of "Flagellant," adopting this corporeal discipline as a primary part of its code; which order finally spread over Europe. So turbulent and revolting, however, did it become, that emperors and pontiffs who once revered it for its sanctity, had to issue decrees for its suppression.† But this barbarous and brutal

* Socrates' Eccles. Hist. lib. iv. chap. 24.

† Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 598. (Soames.)

practice was not strictly confined to cloistered walls, nor solely administered to such as had, by virtue of their vows, buried themselves within them. The laity sometimes were suffered to indulge their taste for this peculiar kind of ecclesiastical discipline. At other times they were the very unwilling victims of the Church's severity. Even flogging by proxy was not altogether a thing unknown at no very distant period, when crowned heads had to submit to such a gross indignity.*

The practice of flagellation by proxy seems to have originated in conjugal affection. A woman who had gone to make her confession was followed to the church by her husband who, fortunately for the wife, entertained doubts as to her fidelity. He secreted himself for a time; when, happening to observe his spouse led by the confessor behind the altar in order to be flagellated, he at once made his appearance; objected that she was too tender to bear the punishment, and offered to receive it in her stead. This proposal the wife greatly applauded;

* The English Translator of the Abbé Boileau's "*History of the Flagellants*," quotes from Cardinal D'Ossat's letters an account of the flogging by proxy of Henry IV. of France, when he was absolved from heresy.

and the man had no sooner placed himself on his knees, than he exclaimed : " Now, my father, lay on stoutly, for I am a great sinner !"*

Manual labour was at first obligatory upon all who embraced a monastic profession, and was regarded both in the light of a penance, and as a necessary duty. The garden and fields, therefore, were cultivated with diligent care. In Egypt, the monks principally occupied themselves by making sandals of wood, and baskets and mats of the palm-tree leaves; the intrinsic value of which being greatly enhanced by the sanctimonious character of the workmen, they were sold at a pretty profitable rate in Alexandria, to which city boats descended from the several monasteries of Tabenne and Thebais.

At length, manual labour became partly or altogether dispensed with, in proportion as the wealth of the monasteries increased. The infatuated novice was obliged to deliver up all his earthly possessions into the hands of the abbot, ere he could be considered as having perfectly renounced the world he had left. Others contributed plate, money, and

* M. Scott. *Menfa Philosophica*, iv. 18.

valuable articles, to a large amount, with the view of obtaining the prayers, or a participation in the penances, of those who, in their estimation, were eminently sanctified servants of God.* All such as respected the common rules of decency, or preserved in their external demeanour the least appearance of piety and virtue, were looked upon as saints of the highest rank, and considered as the peculiar favourites of heaven. This circumstance was, no doubt, favourable to many of the monks, who were less profligate than the rest of their order, and might contribute more or less to support the whole body. Besides, it often happened that princes, dukes, knights, and generals, whose days had been consumed in debauchery and crimes, and distinguished by nothing but the violent exploits of unbridled lust, cruelty, and avarice, felt, at the approach of old age, or death, the inexpressible anguish of a wounded conscience, and the gloomy apprehensions and terrors it excites. In this dreadful condition what was their resource? What were the means by

* "Whoever will enrich monks shall cause his progeny to prosper both in this world and the next."—*Dunst. Concord. Regul. Proem. Spicil. Eadm.* 156.

which they hoped to disarm the uplifted hand of Divine justice, and render the Governor of the world propitious? They purchased, at an enormous price, the prayers of the monks, to screen them from judgment, and devoted to God and to the saints, a large portion of the fruits of their rapine, or entered themselves into the monastic order, and bequeathed their possessions to their new brethren. And thus it was that monkery received perpetually new accessions of opulence and credit.*

From these and numerous other causes, wealth increased in all monasteries of any notoriety, more especially in those of the East, and among the famous order of Benedictines. And with its increase degeneracy grew proportionate.† Hence, we find that those who forsook the world with apparent contempt, were, in reality, its most attached and fondest votaries; being “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.” We can form some idea of the extent of monkish perverseness from the facts, that Pius VII. issued a bull, restricting monks from appearing in play-

* Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 354-5. (Soames.)

† Simon, Biblioth. Critique, tom. iii. cap. xxxii.

houses with the habits of their order ! and that Charlemagne had in vain attempted, by repeated and severe edicts, to put a stop to the growing evils which resulted from their licentiousness and enormities.*

Respecting St. Benedict, founder of the order which bears his name, it may be observed that his life has been written by no less a personage than Pope Gregory the Great, from the information, as he affirms, of four disciples of the saint. It is one of the worst that ever was written ; for though the lives of the saints in general are as richly larded with lies, there is not, perhaps, a single one, with any foundation in truth, from which so little information can be obtained. He was born in the province of Nursia, about the year 480, and was sent to Rome, to study the liberal sciences ; but fearing lest he should lose his soul in the vain pursuit of knowledge, "*recessit scienter nesciens, et sapienter indoc-tus,*" says St. Gregory, he left his family, as well as his studies, became a monk, and was chosen abbot ; but being too strict for those who were under him, they attempted to poison him. After escaping the danger, he

* Capitularia Caroli. published by Baluzius, tom. i. p. 148.

retired for a while into solitude, till, "increasing wonderfully in virtue and miracles," the noble Romans began to bring their children to him for instruction, and he acquired sufficient influence to establish twelve monasteries, with twelve monks in each. Here also he provoked either envy by his reputation, or hatred by his austerity; a priest in the neighbourhood is accused of endeavouring first to poison him, and afterwards to pervert his disciples, and Benedict thought it prudent once more to withdraw. He took with him a few of his monks, and was accompanied by two angels, and three tame cows; a circumstance unaccountably omitted by his papal biographer, but related upon the equally valid testimony of Pietro Damiano, a cardinal and a saint. With this remarkable retinue he arrived at Mount Cassino, formerly, it is said, the residence of the Roman author Varro. There he destroyed a temple of Apollo, converted the pagans in the neighbourhood, founded a convent, wrote the rule of his order,* and died in the year 543.

It may be observed, that many learned

* For an account of which, see note by the Translator, in Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 22, *passim*. (Soames.)

and illustrious individuals have, from time to time, buried themselves in monastic seclusion. But, assuredly, this circumstance does not at all argue in favour of similar retreats; although every one must admit that monasteries were, during the dark ages, the magazines of literature, and the repositories of science.* And I am induced to think, with the Abbé Premord, that “an Alexander, a Cæsar, a Homer, a Virgil, a Cicero, a Plato, a Demosthenes, and a Tacitus, would have remained entirely unknown to us, had it not been for the labours of monks and recluses;” to whose indefatigable pens each lover of science and literature must confess that he owes a large debt of gratitude.† Yet, however highly we may be inclined to value the learning and persevering efforts of these men, we cannot but censure the system with which they were intimately connected; as well as bear in mind, that—

“Talents, angel-bright,
If wanting worth, are shining instruments
In false ambition’s hand—to finish faults
Illustrious, and give infamy renown!”

* Mosheim’s Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 13. (Soames.)

† *Vide* Mabillon, Acta. S. i. Ord. Benedicti, tom. ii. p. 480.



CHAPTER III.

The "Consuetudinal" of Cœnobites and Anchorites.

"The Eremitical life is contrary to the nature of man when it was uncorrupt, for whom it was not judged good to be alone. As the solitary life is an enemy to mankind, (Gen. ii.) so it is to the communion of saints in the Church of God. (Matt. v. 15.) The example of the primitive Church is against it (Acts ii. 44); and the uncleanest and most hateful birds covet desolate places."—CARTER on *Matt.* iii. 1.



MONKS were originally distinguished by the names of Cœnobites and Anchorites. The former so called from the circumstance of their living together under regular rules and discipline; the latter from their extraordinary fanaticism in regulating their own individual observances, and holding little or no intercourse with each other. These early separatists deprecated and condemned the spirit of the monastery as much

as they did that of the world ; and lest they should be contaminated thereby, or induced to become as remiss and unmortified as others, fled from its baneful atmosphere into the inaccessible cave and uninhabitable desert, frequented only by animals of prey, whom they even affected to imitate by going upon their hands and knees ! Some aspirants took up their dwellings in the tombs, like the demoniacs, or abode in dens with wild beasts, or else made dens for themselves, and burrowed into the ground. Here, indeed, they had ample opportunity for gratifying their savage propensities ; and, accordingly, they embraced such a mode of life with delight and satisfaction. But, as might be expected, they finally sunk under the stupendous weight of suffering, occasioned, in part, by heavy chains, collars, bracelets, gauntlets, and greaves, of massive and rigid iron. Even some of those saints (forgive me for abusing the name) disdained the raiment necessary for covering, and wandered about naked, exposed to the sun, the wind, and the sand showers which swept through the desert. A remarkable instance of this peculiar fanaticism is exemplified in the life of St. Mary of Egypt—a person far-famed in monastic lore.

Others, again, affmilating themselves more closely to the very brute, actually grazed in the fields of Mesopotamia ; from which circumstance they were denominated *Boskoi*. And here it will not be ill-timed to mention a strange example of religious fatuity in the person of Simeon Stylites, the famous pillar-saint.*

This extraordinary fanatic, a native of Sisan, in Syria, was engaged in the occupation of a shepherd previous to his entering upon a monastic life. Not considering, however, the profession of a monk sufficiently austere, he formed a scheme, as novel as it was impious, by which he imagined the Divine justice would be appeased, and ample satisfaction rendered for his transgressions ! Accordingly he quitted the cell, and betook himself to a dreary spot in the desert ; where, with a view of escaping the contagion of the world, and being lifted up above its cares, toils, and pursuits, he passed thirty-seven years of his miserable life upon five pillars, of the respective heights of six, twelve, twenty-two, thirty-six, and forty cubits.† Upon

* Sancti Columnares, or in Greek, Stylites.

† *Vide* Acts of Simeon the Stylite, in Steph. Euodii Assmanni *Actis Martyrum Orient. et Occident.* vol. ii. p. 227. (Romæ 1748.)

this last lofty eminence he was bound by irons, so that he was constrained to remain in an immovable position ; and after performing rigorous mortifications, truly deserving of the name, which have helped, in no small degree, to fill the "*merit box*" of the Vatican, he finally expired.

So great was the reputation of this fanatic, and so highly was he venerated, that when the emperor Theodosius had given a command to reinstate the Jews of Antioch in their synagogue, and Simeon rebuked him for his conduct, Theodosius confessed the iniquity of which he was guilty : and, not deeming this act sufficient to expiate his sin, he actually deposed the civil officer who advised him in the affair, ousted the poor persecuted descendants of Abraham, and finally besought, with earnestness and humiliation, the prayers and intercession of the aerial saint !

After the decease of Simeon, a church was built round the pillar, upon which he passed so great a portion of his life, in order to perpetuate the remembrance of so devoted a man. And it is related on the authority of Evagrius, who had been a spectator of the miracle, that on each anniversary of the saint,

a star was observed playing about the lofty monument. Women were not permitted to enter the church on these auspicious occasions; they might only stand at the door, and peep in, to witness the supernatural manifestation of delight with which Heaven viewed a heap of stones upon which the feet of so austere and sanctified a being once rested. His body was finally translated to Antioch; and from thence would have been removed, by the emperor Leo, to Constantinople, had it not been for the entreaty of the people of the former city, who represented that an earthquake had thrown down their fortifications, and that they had brought thither the body of Simeon, in order to supply for them the want of a wall. The actions of this madman, or "saint," according to the phraseology of the schoolmen, are recorded for edification, though not for *imitation*, by Romish hagiographers. "This godly man," writes Evagrius, "while yet in the flesh, imitated the life of angels, withdrew himself from earthly things, forced nature, which ever inclineth downwards, aspiring to things heavenly, and placing himself between earth and heaven, he, together with the angels, praised the Lord, lifted up the prayers of

men, and offered them to God, and brought down the mercy of God to make men partakers thereof."

There is mention made of a second Simeon the Stylite, who lived about the sixth century, and who, it is said, exceeded, in mortification of life, the originator of the ærial sect. He lived upon his pillar sixty-eight years, and pretended to work miracles, and to prophecy.* Such are the sort of men held forth to the christian world as flowers of the spiritual garden ; whereas, in truth, they are but rank weeds of the Egyptian soil.

This extraordinary superstition of the Syrians and Orientals, the Latins had too much judgment and good sense to imitate ; nor was it countenanced by the bishops of the Latin church : for when Wulfilaicus erected a pillar in Treves, with the view of imitating the renowned Simeon, by living on its summit, the neighbouring bishops would not suffer him to put his desire into effect, and had the pillar crumbled to the ground.†

The lives of monastic heroes and heroines occasionally furnish us with numerous in-

* Evagrius Eccles. Hist. lib. vi. c. xxiii. p. 471.

† Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. vol. i. p. 467-8. (Soames.)

stances of the filliest extravagances, and the most pitiable and loathsome excesses of ascetic rigour. We read, for example, of St. Simon Stock, general of the Carmelites, who dwelt in the trunk of an old oak-tree; of St. Pier, who always walked while he was taking his food, "because," to use his own words, "he did not consider eating as a business for which time was to be set apart, but as a thing to be done when it did not interrupt his avocation;" of Beradat, who used no clothing, except a close sack of skins, which had no other opening than one for his nose, and another for his mouth; of the abbess Teresa, who, in order to torment her body, which was naturally weak and delicate, made use of hair-shirts, nettles, and scourges, and even used to roll herself among thorns; of Eufraxia, who belonged to a convent containing one hundred and thirty nuns, not one of whom ever washed her feet—the very mention of such an indulgence as a bath being an abomination to them!

St. Rose of Lima, canonized by Clement X. A. D. 1673, was the most precocious of saints. Born of christian parents, in South America, she, from the period of her birth, shone with the presages of future holiness.

It is said, that the face of the infant being miraculously transfigured into the image of a rose, occasioned her being called by this name, to which the Virgin Mary added the surname, commanding her from thenceforth to be designated the Rose of St. Mary. She vowed perpetual virginity at the early age of five years !* The following affecting account of the austerities she practised is extracted from the bull of her canonization, and affords a pitiable specimen of religious fanaticism :—

“ She changed the stones and crosses (with which, when going to prayer in her childhood, and as yet ignorant of the use of whips, she was loaded by her maid Marianne, who was almost the only person conscious of her mortifications) into iron chains, which she prepared as scourges, and, after the example of St. Dominic, every night she offered herself a bloody victim to God to avert his just anger, even to the copious effusion of streams of blood, either for the sorrows of the holy church, or for the necessities of the endangered kingdom of the city of Lima, or for compensating the wrongs of sinners, or

* Brev. Rom. Die xxx. Aug.

for making an expiation for the souls of the dead, or for obtaining divine aid for those who were in their last agonies ; the servant being sometimes horror-struck at the dreadful blows of the chains. And when the use of these were forbidden to her, she privately encircled her waist with one of them, bound thrice round her, so that it never was apparent that she wore it, except when she was under the tortures of the sciatica, which chain was afterwards loosened only by a miracle. Its links after the virgin's death were found to emit a wondrous and indescribable sweet odour. Lest any part of her innocent body should be free from suffering, she tortured her arms and limbs with penal chains, and stuffed her breasts and sides with handfuls of nettles and small briars. She afterwards increased the sharpness of the hair-cloth, that reached from her neck beneath her knees, by needles mixed up with it, which she used for many years, until she was ordered to put it off on account of the frequent vomiting of blood. When she laid aside this punishment, she substituted another garment less injurious to her health, but not less troublesome ; for beneath it every movement was painful to her. Her feet only were free from these suf-

ferings, which either by hitting them with stones, or by the burning of an oven, she did not suffer to be free from torture. * * *

“ She fixed upon her head a tin crown, with sharp little nails in it, and for some years never put it on without receiving wounds. When she grew older, this was replaced by one which was armed by ninety-nine points. * * * *

“ She desired the hardness of her bed to be such that it should rather drive away than invite sleep ; so that when about to sleep, the same should be both a bed to her and an instrument of torture. Her pillow was either an unpolished trunk, or stones concealed for this purpose, which bed she afterwards so filled with sharp pieces of tiles and triangular pieces of broken jugs, that the sharp points of each should be turned to her body ; nor did she try to sleep until she had embittered her mouth with a draught of gall.

“ Near the time of her death, Rosa throughout Lent alternately sang the canticles and praises of God, every day for a whole hour, with a very melodious bird, in so orderly a manner, that when the bird sang, the virgin was silent, and when the virgin sang, the bird, who was most attentive, ceased to sing.

Cænobites and Anchorites. 41

She invited, moreover, the inanimate plants, after an unheard-of fashion, to praise and to pray to God, pronouncing the verse, '*Benedicite universa germinantia in terra Domino.*' 'Bless the Lord, all ye things which bud on the earth.' And she so visibly persuaded them, that the tops of the trees touched the earth, as if adoring their Creator with a solemn veneration!"*

The following specimen of worse than Hindoo fanaticism, establishes the fact, that the Romish standard of sanctity in the nineteenth century is just the same as it was during the dark ages, when the greatest knaves and madmen were canonized as saints, and obtained a place in the Calendar. It is the sworn testimony of Father Dominic Corsano, missionary of the Congregation of the most holy Redeemer, and confessor to the venerable servant of God, Alphonso Maria de Liguria, bishop of St. Agatha, declared at his canonization, A. D. 1830:—

* Codex Constitutionum, quas summi pontifices ediderunt in solemnibus canonizationibus Sanctorum a Johanne xv. ad Benedictum xiii., sive ab an. Dom. 993, usque ad A. D. 1729. Accurante Justo Fontanino, Archiepiscopo Anconitano. Romæ, 1729. Ex typographia Reverendæ Cameræ Apostolicæ.

“ I know for a certainty that this servant of God constantly scourged himself unbloodily and bloodily; and besides the unbloody scourgings enjoined by his rule, he was wont to punish himself every day; in the morning before the usual hour of rising, and in the evening after the signal for repose. On Saturdays he scourged himself till the blood flowed, and these scourgings were so violent, and caused so much blood to gush from his limbs, that not only was his linen always covered with it, but you might even see the walls of his small room stained, and his books sprinkled with it. * * * * Also from what I have seen with my own eyes, and have heard declared by certain fathers who are worthy of credit, I know that this servant of God macerated his body with hair-cloth with sharp points in it, and with chains, as well on the arms as on the legs, which he carried with him till dinner time, and these for the most part were so armed with sharp points, that they filled with horror all who ever saw them. I have heard say, also, that he had a dress filled with a coat of mail with iron points; that he had bandages of camel's hair; and other instruments of penance were casually seen by me, and by others of my companions,

notwithstanding his zealous and circumspect secrecy.

“Of a similar kind was his extreme mortification in sleeping upon two planks covered with a sack, with a little straw in it, so that it appeared a hard stone. I frequently also heard say, that he slept during his few hours with a large stone hung on, and tied to his feet. * * * *

“I well remember that he never shaved himself when he was with us with a razor, but only by little and little he did it with pincers, and he caused his assistant friar to make his clerical crown with the same pincers!” *

The Roman Breviary is the repertory of legends as monstrous and ridiculous as those already brought before the reader's notice. Therein we read, that St. Raymond of Penafort made a voyage by sea of one hundred and sixty miles, from one of the Balearic Isles to Barcelona, neither in a ship, nor in a boat, but upon his own cloak; † that St.

* Sacra rituum congregatione, emo. et Rmo. Domino Cardinali Carracciolo relatore, beatificationis et canonizationis, ven. Servi Dei Alphonsi Maria de Ligurio, fundatoris congregationis semi. Redemptoris, ac olim Episcopi S. Agatha. Romæ, 1836. Apud Lazarinum, Rev. Cam. Apos. typographum.

† Breviarum Romanum, Die xxiii. Januarii.

44 *Monastic Institutions.*

Philip, of Nerium, was so wounded with the love of God, he continually languished ; and his heart boiled over with such ardour, that when it could not be contained within its own boundaries, the Lord wonderfully enlarged his breast, by breaking and elevating two of his ribs ;* that St. Dionysius walked, with his head in his hands, from Paris to the site of the present abbey of St. Denis ;† that St. Nicholas, a holy infant, used regularly abstain from suck on Wednesdays and Fridays ;‡ that St. Benedict, founder of an order of monks, used to work miracles habitually, raise the dead to life, and sing psalms before he was born ;§ and that St. Patrick was wont

* Breviarum Romanum, Die xxvi. Maii.

† *Ibid.* Die ix. Octobris.

‡ *Ibid.* Die vi. Decembris.

§ *Ibid.* Die xxi. Martii. This strange incident is thus gravely narrated by the Cistercian poet, F. Nicholas Bravo, in his *Benedictina*, on the authority of Bonifacius Simoneta, an abbot of his order :—

——“ Encarcelado en el lugar materno,
Alegres muestras el infante dava,
Articulando con un son superno
La voz que claro afuera resonava ;
Ya en esto el niño delicada y tierno
El gozo celestial pronosticava,
Pues, aunque en carcel tenebrosa y negra

to repeat daily the whole psalter, together with the canticles, and two hundred hymns and prayers; three hundred times on each day to worship God upon his knees, and in each canonical hour of the day to sign himself one hundred times with the sign of the cross. Dividing the night into three portions, he spent the first in running through one hundred psalms, and in two hundred genuflexions; the second, in running through the other fifty psalms, immersed in cold water; and with his heart, eyes, and hands, raised to heaven, he yielded the third part to a short sleep upon a hard stone.*

Miss Nano Nagle, a striking illustration, in even recent times, of the dreadful and degrading system of monachism—an engine of destruction wielded with powerful effect in

Con celestiales canticos se alegra.
Que pudo ser la vida de este infante,
Sino contento, jubilo, alborozo,
Pues sin mira del sol la luz radiante,
Antes que sepa el llanto, muestra el gozo
Ya da indicios alegres de triunphante
Del infernal y Tartaro destrozo,
Semejante al Baptista en gloria tanta,
Pues donde danza Juan, Benito canta.”

* S. Patritius *Breviarum Romanum*. Die xvii. Martii.
Antverpæ, 1823.

advancing the interests of the Papal church—was well known as the founder of the Presentation Order of nuns in Ireland. To such an extent was her mind influenced by religious fanaticism, that she remained almost continually in a kneeling posture, to enhance the merit of her devotions. Her knees became, in consequence, ulcerated; but she did not cease to assume this attitude, nor would she employ a remedy, although there is not the slightest doubt that so protracted an act of austerity, tended to hasten her dissolution :*—

“ O judgment, thou hast fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason !”

The ecclesiastical historian, describing Romish saints, truly observes :—

“ No models of rational piety are to be found among those pretended worthies, whom they propose to christians as objects of imitation. They amuse their readers with gigantic fables and trifling romances. The example they exhibit are those of certain delirious *fanatics*, whom they call *saints*; men of a corrupt and perverted judgment, who offered violence to reason and nature by the

* *Vide* Life of Miss Nano Nagle.

horrors of an extravagant austeriety in their own conduct, and by the severity of those singular and inhuman rules which they prescribed to others. For, by what means were these men *fainted*? By starving themselves with a frantic obstinacy, and bearing the useless hardships of hunger, thirst, and inclement seasons, with steadfastness and perseverance; by running about the country like madmen, in tattered garments, and sometimes half naked, or shutting themselves up in a narrow space, where they continued motionless; by standing for a long time in certain postures, with their eyes closed, in the enthusiastic expectation of divine light. All this was faint-like and glorious; and the more that any ambitious fanatic departed from the dictates of reason and common sense, and counterfeited the wild gestures and the incoherent conduct of an idiot, or a lunatic, the surer was his prospect of obtaining an eminent rank among the heroes and demi-gods of a corrupt and degenerate church.”*

Perhaps no other religious system has given rise to such gross extravagances as christianity, when mistaken and perverted, is known

* Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. lib. ii. cent. vi. p. ii. c. iii. § 7.

to have superinduced. That the purest and most perfect code of ethical philosophy ever propounded to the world should have been the indirect cause of human error, folly, and crime, is truly lamentable, and should teach us to pity as well as to condemn the weaknesses and absurdities of mankind. Generally, perhaps, we are all too liable to be led away by our first emotions, when perusing the various examples of fanaticism which the historian has recorded, and of pronouncing an unmitigated censure, never once taking into account the peculiar circumstances conducing to such a rude and unnatural condition of things. This is undoubtedly an original and grave error. There is an imbecility quite as much the effect of time and place, as of organization and ignorance. If intention be taken into account, no one is foolish, and even monasticism is wise if the *rationalé* thereof could be admitted. What, indeed, could be expected of a reasonable character at an epoch when Reason itself had been dethroned, and when Fanaticism usurped supreme sway over the human mind? When, in point of faith, no axioms of morality were more firmly established than the belief that every indulgence was criminal; that what-

ever gratified the senses, however apparently innocent, must be injurious to the soul ;* that the ties of human affection weaned the heart from God ;† that the duties of social life must be abandoned by those who regarded their salvation ;‡ and that in proportion as a man inflicted privations and heaped torments upon himself, he pleased his Creator ? § What, indeed, could be expected under a perverted moral *régime* like this, different to that which the page of history so painfully records ? And what can be expected of a dissimilar nature, so long as the like morbid and distorted notions of “ pure and undefiled religion ” continue to be countenanced, nay, even recommended by those who certainly ought to know better, and whose sacred duty

* Aldhelm, writing to his pupil Adelwold, desires him to avoid conviviality, the culpable exercise of riding, or any “ accursed pleasures of bodily indulgence.”—*Anglia Sacr.* 1.

† *Dimitte omnia, et invenies omnia.*—If thou leavest all for God, thou shalt find all in God.—*Thomas à Kempis.*

‡ *Facilis via de cellâ ad cælum. Vix unquam aliquis è cellâ infernum descendit.* From the cell to heaven the way is very easy ; one can scarcely go down from thence into hell.—*St. Bernard.*

§ The religious suffers to render himself more acceptable to God.—*Liguori.*

it is, as teachers of christianity, to inculcate the reverse? But the Romish church is very fearful of change; consequently, she conserves everything and reforms nothing. To be consistent with herself she is necessitated so to do; although the very guarding against innovation manifestly implies tenacity of obsolete barbarism. Hence, when the omnipotence of modern thought entered within the *penetralia* of the Convent of St. Maur, and the learned Benedictines tried the experiment of commuting certain tiresome duties of the Rule, as unworthy of the age in which they lived, and with the view of prosecuting more unremittingly the pursuit of learning, and issuing more frequently valuable publications, the dispensation was immediately refused—as a daring innovation.*

* *Vide* “D’Israeli’s Curiosities of Literature with reference to the Benedictines.”



CHAPTER IV.

Character of those who embraced the Monastic Profession.

“ Monastic institutions were in the first ages merely superstitious; but they ended in being eminently corrupt and wicked.”



WITH reference to the character of those self-righteous Pharisees, who sought, both in the desert and the cell, to attain a transcendental purity and perfection by the regular performance of a certain routine of duties, and the scrupulous observance of rules and constitutions, as absurd in their nature as they were degrading to social beings, I shall, in the first instance, take an extract from the writings of Rutilius, a celebrated traveller, who, upon visiting the island of Capraria, originally inhabited by wild goats, and taking its name from that circumstance,

expressed his surprise, on beholding its new inhabitants, in the following terms :—

“ The whole island is filled, or rather defiled, by men who fly from the light. They call themselves monks, or solitaries, because they desire to live alone, without any witnesses of their actions. They fear the gifts of fortune from the apprehension of losing them ; and lest they should be miserable, they embrace a life of voluntary wretchedness. How absurd is their choice, how perverse their understanding, to dread the evils without being able to support the blessings of the human condition. Either this melancholy madness is the effect of disease, or else the consciousness of guilt urges these unhappy men to exercise on their own bodies the tortures which are inflicted on fugitive slaves by the hands of justice.”*

Another writer,† alluding to that division of the Franciscan order, denominated the “ Spirituals,” observes :—

“ So mad were these monks, that they conceived there was more honour in living

* Claud. Rutul. Numation. Itinerar. I. 439.

† The author of the Life of the Regent Murray, patron of the Reformation in Scotland.

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by beggary than in any other profession. They roved about barefooted, and clad in coarse raiment, whining in every district, and rejoicing in their poverty ; and at this period the miraculous sight was seen of a great schism in the church, occasioned solely by the fanaticism of those wealthy votaries of St. Francis, the prince of beggars. * * * *

“ But the truth is, if we reckon not the bodily mortifications to which those devotees might have submitted, there was literally nothing in all this profession of beggary which deserved the name ; for though they undoubtedly subsisted by alms, it was not defined of what these alms should consist ; and hence, although beggary was their glory, and the order of mendicancy their highest boast, they nevertheless, in superstitious times, fared not much worse than those who saw no cause for glorying in such a distinction. And the influence which they possessed by thus associating themselves with men of all ranks, and by this accommodation of themselves to every condition, enabled them to preserve the protection of the great, to gain ready access to every habitation, to interfere in every domestic circle, and to obtain devotees to their confessionals. They were, in short, a set of

peripatetic ecclesiastics ; and latterly, like all the other orders, they degenerated into roving priests.”*

Dalzell, after employing the epithet “truly licensed vagabonds,” proceeds to say of the monks :—“Their only just characteristics were ignorance and assurance, levying a general contribution for their maintenance. Their business was to keep the people as ignorant as themselves, and to inculcate a profound veneration for saints, relics, and the ministers of the church. Their manners were rude, brutal, and rapacious. They were vagrant monks.”†

It is a matter of undoubted testimony that, so ignorant were many of the ecclesiastics of the sixteenth century that they believed the New Testament to be written by Martin Luther, and consequently regarded it as a wicked book. Müller relates that, about the time of the Reformation a bishop of Dunfeldt congratulated himself upon never having learned Greek or Hebrew. The monks asserted that all heresies arose from the Greek. “The New Testament,” said one of the

* Life of George Buchanan.

† Curfory Remarks, vol. i. p. 16.

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fraternity, “ is a book full of serpents and thorns. Greek is a *modern* language, recently invented, against which we must be on our guard. As to Hebrew, my dear brethren, it is certain that whoever studies it becomes immediately a Jew !” Even the Parisian School of Theology solemnly put forth this announcement :—“ There is an end of religion if the study of Hebrew and Greek is permitted.” Perhaps this almost incredible ignorance is not to be wondered at when we bear in mind that, as late as the year 1400 scarce any book, except missals, was found in Rome. Of course, there have been some noble exceptions to the general rule ; and, as I before observed, several learned monks applied themselves diligently and laboriously to Herculean tasks, and tenaciously preserved and carefully transcribed works of utility and merit, which, but for their labours, would never have been transmitted to posterity.

Mosheim, the ecclesiastical historian, speaking of monkish orders, says :—“ The multitude had such a high opinion of those sturdy beggars, and of their credit with the Supreme Being, that great numbers of both sexes, some in health, others in a state of infirmity, others at the point of death, earnestly desired to be

admitted into the mendicant orders, which they looked upon as a safe and infallible method of rendering heaven propitious. Many made it an essential part of their last wills, that their carcases, after death, should be wrapped in old ragged Dominican or Franciscan habits, and interred among the mendicants. For such was the barbarous superstition and wretched ignorance of this age, that people universally believed they should readily obtain mercy from Christ at the day of judgment, if they appeared before his tribunal associated with the mendicant friars.”*

Nicholas de Clemangius, pupil of the celebrated Gerson, rector of the University of Paris, and Secretary to Benedict XII., a man of no ordinary powers of mind, and a profound and accomplished scholar, who, from the circumstance of his being connected with the Papal court, must have had peculiar facilities afforded him of acquiring information upon ecclesiastical matters, thus writes, in his description of the monastic orders:—

“I should have much to say of the monks and monastics, were I not long ere this weary of the enumeration of so many and such great

* Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 660. (Soames.)

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abominations. Yet, not to suffer them to pass wholly untouched, it is necessary to say something. But what good can be said of those who, in proportion as they are bound by their vows to be perfect above all other sons of the church, abstracted from the care of worldly things, which they have renounced, and raised up to the contemplation of heavenly things alone ; in proportion as they are obliged to be more temperate, less disposed to wander, and to go more seldom from the walls of their cloister into public, in the same proportion exhibit themselves, on the contrary, as more than others, strangers to all these obligations ; more grasping, more avaricious, more immersed in secular affairs, more slippery, more undisciplined, dissolute, and restless, more prone to run about into public, and even, if the reins are loosened, indecent places ; so as that nothing is so odious to them as the cell and the cloister, reading and prayer, their rule and their profession. Wherefore they are monks indeed in their outward habit, but in life, in practice, inwardly in the defilement of their consciences, they are very far removed from that perfection which their habit pretends. Verily they grievously deceive themselves. For the more they aban-

don their profession, and seek eagerly after earthly riches, so much the less do they really hold, and so much the more do their endowments and revenues run away to nothing.

“The nuns only now remain. * * * But modesty forbids me to say much of these, though I have much to say, lest we should draw out to too great length a discourse which should apply not to a choir of virgins dedicated to God, but rather to * * * * and the impure practices of unchastity. For what, I pray you, are the nunneries now but sanctuaries—not of God, but of Venus?”*

The same writer further observes:—“I would not that any should suppose that I involve all our ecclesiastics, without any exception, in such charges. I know that he did not, and could not lie, who said, ‘Peter, I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.’ Nor am I ignorant that there are in every station some, and perhaps many, good, just, and innocent men, who stand aloof from those crimes which have been mentioned. But so great is the overflow of the wicked in all

* Compare Ivo of Chartres, Ep. 70, and the note of Juretus upon that place.

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professions, that scarce one in a thousand can be found who honestly performs what his profession requires. Nay, if there chanced to be some simple, chaste, and frugal man, in a college or convent, who does not pursue the broad and slippery road, he is made a jest of by the rest, and is presently called an oddity, or singular person, a madman, or a hypocrite. Whence also many who might have turned out well, if they had lived with modest and good men, drawn away in this manner by the company of evil comrades, are led into evil, through fear of incurring such nicknames in their fraternities.”*

I may, perhaps, indulge the hope that enlightened Romanists will receive with respect a testimony emanating from the pen of so talented and distinguished a member of their communion.

The moderate and candid Cassander, alluding to the low state of morals amongst the religious orders of his time, remarks :—

“ It is sufficiently manifest of itself how much monkery has degenerated from its first origin, and with what abuses it has become con-

* De Corrupto Stat. Eccles. Lib. in Fasc. Rer. Expet. et Fug. tom. ii. Lond. 1690.

taminated. The empty observance of ceremonies has so impaired and obscured religion amongst most monks, that you will hardly find anywhere a more licentious and profane mode of life than that which is practised in some monasteries. So that it is no wonder if, as the monastic life generally now is, it is exposed to the hatred and reprehension of many.”*

As a further testimony of the inconsistency of character in persons professing to be scrupulously observant of the rules of monastic life, I shall adduce the evidence of one who, for several years, both in the capacity of a novice, and a professed nun, was in connection with the *Hotel Dieu Nunnery*, at Montreal :—

“ I have often reflected,” observes the writer, “ how grievously I had been deceived in my opinion of a nun’s condition ! All the holiness of their lives, I now saw, was merely pretended. The appearance of sanctity and heavenly-mindedness which they had shown amongst us novices, I found was only a disguise to conceal such practices as would not be tolerated in any decent society in the world ; and as for peace and joy like that of heaven,

* Inter opp. Grotii. Theol. tom. iii. p. 608.

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which I had expected to find among them, I learned too well that they did not exist *here.*"*

I shall now allude to the declaration drawn up and signed by six nuns of St. Catherine of Pistoia, and presented to the Grand Duke Leopold, A. D. 1775, which makes mention of the profligacy and gross impiety of the Dominican fathers ; in consequence of which complaint five convents were removed from the direction of these confessors. In it they observe :—

“ Instead of allowing us to remain in our simplicity, and protecting our innocence, they teach us both by word and action, all kinds of indecencies. They come frequently to the sacristy, of which they possess the keys. When, besides this they find any occasion or pretence for entering the nunnery, they remain alone with their favourites in their cells. All are alike, not excepting the provincials. They utter the worst expressions, saying, that we should look upon it as a great happiness in having the power of satisfying our appetites without being exposed to the annoyance of bringing up children. They suffer

* Sequel to the Disclosures of Maria Monk.

the nuns to remain away a long time from the sacraments, and are at no pains to induce mental prayer, but preach only about the happiness of this life. The nuns, who live according to such direction, are praised and gratified in everything, however extravagant. The others must needs strain their consciences, or be in a perpetual warfare.*

In addition to this document, a confirmatory deposition, of a more prolix kind and less abounding in generalities, was, in reply to several interrogatories, made by Sister Flavia Peraccini. Amongst many particulars she mentions that—

“ Every year when the monks bring to us the holy water, they upset it in their playing with the nuns. What revels they make ! One time they washed Father Manni’s face, and dressed him up as a nun. In short, they made scenes of constant amusement for themselves, &c. Do not say that these things occur alone in our convent. They go on at St. Lucia, at Prato, at Pisa, at Perugia, and I have heard things that would astonish. In them all there are the same proceedings, in all the same disorders, in all the same abuses.

* Roscoe’s *Life of Scipio de Ricci*, vol. i.

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A monk said to myself that if a nun's veil were placed on one pole, and a monk's cowl on another, so great is the force of sympathy that the veil and the cowl would come together and unite. I say, and repeat it, that whatever the superiors know, they do not know the least portion of the great evils that pass between the monks and the nuns."

The founder of the famous Benedictines, in the opening of the rule of his order, fails not to animadvert upon the degeneracy of the fraternity. By the way, this rule has been compared to Aaron's rod, because it swallowed up all the others. At the second Council of Douzy, in 876, it was declared to be an inspired work, of equal authority with the canonical Scriptures and the writings of the Catholic doctors. Leo, archbishop of Ravenna, calls it a divine rule, dictated by the Holy Ghost, and leading infallibly to heaven. The Grand Duke, Cosmo de Medici, studied it, that he might there learn how to govern his estates; and Calmet affirms, that in this work St. Benedict has presented an ideal of the most excellent monarchy and the most perfect government. More than two hundred works have been written upon it, of which the best is a Com-

mentary, in two quarto volumes, by Calmet himself. The original rule, an autograph of Benedict, was burnt A.D. 897, in the monastery of Theano, when that edifice was consumed by fire. Some far more curious relics were destroyed at the same time, the sacks in which food used to be sent to the saint from heaven!—" *Sacci, in quibus jussu Dei, cœlitus eidem Patri Benedicto escæ delatæ sunt!*"* However, St. Benedict thus writes with reference to the monastics:—

" There are four kinds of monks. The first is of Cœnobites, that is monasterial or conventual, living under a rule or abbot. The second kind is of Anchorites, that is hermits, who not by a novitiate fervour of devotion, but by a long probation in a monastic life, have learnt, with the assistance of others to fight against the devil; and being well armed, are able now, without the support of any other, by God's help, to fight hand to hand against the vices of the flesh and evil cogitations, and so proceed from the fraternal army to the single combat of the wilderness. The third and foulest kind of monks are the Saraibaites, who not having

* Chronicon Cassinense.

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been tried under any rule by the experience of a skilful master, as gold is tried in the furnace, but being soft as lead, and still adhering by their actions to the world, are known by their tonsures to be liars unto God ; who two or three together, or perhaps singly, without a shepherd, are shut up, not in the Lord's sheepfold, but in their own ; and the pleasure of their desires is to them a law ; and whatsoever they like or choose, this they will have to be holy, and what they dislike, that not to be lawful. The fourth are they who are called Gyrovagi, who all their life wander through divers provinces, and guest-wise, stay two or three days in one monastery, and then in another, and are always strolling and never settled, and giving themselves altogether to their own pleasures and to the enticements of gluttony, are in all things worse than the Saraibites, of the most miserable conversation, *of all which it is better to be silent than to speak !*"* So far from the pen of St. Benedict.

St. Bernard, abbot, thus describes the

* Trans. of the Rule of St. Benedict, by C. G., priest and monk of the Order. Douay, 1638.

worldly-mindedness and immorality of the monks of his day :—

“ What shall I say concerning their very dress, in which not warmth but colour is sought after, and neatness of apparel, rather than virtue, is considered ! *I am ashamed to declare it !* But even women are surpassed in their love of dress, since richness of apparel, and not what is necessary, is studied by the monks ; nor is even the form of religion retained ! The soldiers of Christ desire rather to be gaily dressed than to be armed.”*

St. Bridget, in her “ Revelations,” which were recognized by the Councils of Constance and Bâle, and by Urban VI., Martin V., and Paul V., after making such remarks on the deportment of the monks and nuns as that I am compelled by feelings of delicacy to conceal them under the veil of the original,† proceeds to say :—

* S. Bern. Ab. in Vig. Nat. Dom. Serm. i. *De Monach.*

† Orta est abusus gravis, in hoc, quod laicis bona ecclesiæ donantur, qui uxores non ducunt propter nomen canonicale, sed impudentur habent concubinas in domibus suis per dies, et in lectis per noctes, dicentes audacter, nos non licet esse in connubio, quia canonici sumus. Presbyteri etiam diaconi et subdiaconi, olim in infamiam immundæ vitæ maxime abhorrebant. Nunc autem quidam illorum

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“It is a sad thing to behold their rules changed into detestable abuses.” And again, alluding to the nuns, she observes:—

“The doors through which the sisters are pleased to afford an entrance to clergy and laity, are open even at night; and therefore such places resemble rather houses of bad fame than holy cloisters!”*

In the Homilies of the Anglican church we are presented with the following vivid delineation of monasticism, as it appeared at a more modern epoch:—

“Passing over the innumerable superstitiousness that hath been in strange apparel, in silence, in dormitory, in cloister, in chapter, in choice of meats and drinks, and in such like things, let us consider what enormities and abuses have been in the three principal points, which they call the three essentials, or chief foundations of religion; that is to

manifestè lætantur in eo, quod meretrices eorum intumescere ventre veniunt inter alias ambulare. Nec etiam pudet eos si ab amicis eorum dicitur eis, ecce, domine, citò natus erit vobis filius vel filia!—*Revelationem S. Birgittæ*, lib. iv. c. 33. (*Edit. Coloniae*, 1829.)

* Portæ indifferenter clericis et laicis quibus placet fororibus introitum dare etiam in ipsis noctibus sunt apertæ. Et idèd talia loca similia lupanaribus, quàm sanctis claustris.—*Revel. S. Birgittæ*, lib. iv. c. 33.

say, *obedience, chastity, and wilful poverty.* First, under pretence or colour of obedience to their father in religion, which obedience they made themselves, they were made free by their rules and canons from the obedience of their natural father and mother, and from the obedience of emperor and king, and all temporary power, whom of very duty, by God's laws, they were bound to obey. And so the profession of their obedience not due, was a forsaking of their due obedience. And how their profession of chastity was kept, it is more honest to pass over in silence, and let the world judge of what is well known, than with unchaste words, by expressing of their unchaste life, to offend chaste and godly ears. And as for their wilful poverty, it was such that, when in possessions, jewels, plate, and riches, they were equal or above merchants, gentlemen, barons, earls, and dukes;* yet by this subtle, sophistical term, *proprium in communi*, that is to say, proper in common, they mocked the world; persuading that not-

* Abbots and priors as late as the 18th century, governed their abbeys with sovereign control; and their revenues and possessions were so great as to entitle them to seats in Parliament among the peers.—*Monasticon Hibernicum*, by Mervin Archdall, A.M. M.R. I. A.

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withstanding all their possessions and riches, yet they kept their vow, and were in wilful poverty. But for all their riches, they might neither help father nor mother, nor other that were indeed very needy and poor, without the license of their father-abbot, prior, or warden ; and yet they might take of every man, but they might not give aught to any man ; no, not to those whom the laws of God bound them to help * * * * * And the longer prayers they used by day and night, under pretence and colour of holiness, to get the favour of widows and other simple folk, that they might sing trentalles and service for their husbands and friends, and admit or receive them into their prayers, the more truly is verified of them the saying of Christ : ‘ Woe unto you scribes, and pharisees, hypocrites ! For you devour widows’ houses under colour of long prayers, therefore your condemnation shall be the greater.’ ” *

We have, further, a very appalling picture presented to us of monastic profligacy, drawn by the masterly hand of the Rev. Joseph Blanco White, once a priest of the Romish Church, and chaplain to the king of Spain.

* Homily of Good Works, part iii.

After describing, at great length, the immoral practices of the Spanish ecclesiastics, and other priests of his acquaintance, some of whom, in consequence of their depraved habits, were prematurely cut off the stage of existence in a state of frantic insanity, he proceeds to remark of the nuns :—

“ The picture of female convents requires a more delicate pencil. Yet I cannot find tints sufficiently dark and gloomy to portray the miseries which I have witnessed in their inmates. Crime, indeed, makes its way into those recesses, in spite of the spiked walls and prison gates which protect the inhabitants. *This I know with all the certainty which the self-accusation of the guilty can give!* It is, besides, a notorious fact, that the nunneries in Estremadura and Portugal are frequently infected with vice of the grossest kind.”*

Speaking of the character of the secular and regular clergy of the 12th century, Mosheim observes :—

“ Of the flagitious conduct, the frauds, the ignorance, and the corruption of the inferior bishops, the priests, and the deacons,

* Practical and Internal Evidence against Catholicism. (Lond. 1825.)

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the whole history of these times, and the laws of the ecclesiastical councils, afford ample testimony. It is not strange, therefore, that the monks were in higher repute than the secular clergy ; for being bound by their vows and by their respective rules of life, they had fewer opportunities of committing crimes. And yet these monks, who claimed pre-eminence in the church, and despised and inveighed against both the secular clergy and the regular canons, had in most places departed entirely from their institutions and rules, and exhibited to the public patterns of vice and wickedness, rather than of virtue. The Cluniacensians were for a long time the best and most devout among the Benedictines ; but under their abbot, Pontius, being loaded with wealth and riches by the liberality of the pious, they entirely laid aside their former strictness, and copied after the base lives of the other Benedictines. And, although some of the succeeding abbots endeavoured to cure the evil, their efforts fell far below their wishes and their expectations ; nor could the primitive sanctity of Clugni ever be restored.”*

* Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 457-8. (Soames.)

Archbishop Leighton in alluding to the vaunted supernaturalism of the religious orders, thus quaintly and ironically observes :—

“ They seem to make holiness a kind of inappropriate good, that the common sort can have little share in almost all piety, being shut up within cloister walls as its only fit dwelling. Yet it hath not liked their lodging it seems, but is flown over the walls away from them, for there is little of it even there to be found.”*

Although the writers whose testimony has been adduced may be considered of sufficient authority in affording to the world a true and unexaggerated character of the monastic orders ; yet these were not the only individuals of note, who, regardless of the painful consequences which such a course was likely to involve, openly and fearlessly exposed the abominations of monkery, and declaimed loudly against the enormities perpetrated in the name of religion, and by those *foi-disant* saints whose sanctity was but another name for licentiousness. We find that Robert Gosthead, bishop of Lincoln, inveighed bitterly against the corruption, lewdness,

* Life of R. Leighton, D.D. by James Aikman.

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and wickedness of the so-called "religious orders" of his age. In like manner did Matthew Paris, Benedictine Monk of St. Albans, a man justly celebrated for his learning and exemplary life,* paint, in the liveliest colours, the libidinous and corrupt character of his confrères. In Italy, Arnold of Brescia, a pupil of Peter Abelard, attempted a revolution of ecclesiastical manners and abuses, for which Innocent II. had him banished into Switzerland, having been previously condemned in the council of Lateran, A.D. 1139. After the death of this pontiff, his third successor, Eugene, to whom Arnold had also given cause of complaint, stipulated with the emperor Frederic I. to deliver Arnold into his hands; upon which he was first strangled, then his body was burnt, and his ashes thrown into the Tiber, A.D. 1155.† William of St. Amour, a doctor of the Sorbonne, a man of wonderful genius, also raised his voice and employed his pen against the whole mendicant orders collectively;

* He was in great favour with Henry II. and employed by the Pope to reform some foreign convents.

† Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 504. (Soames.)
Spanheim's Eccles. Ann.

and in a treatise "Of the Perils of the latter Times" he applies the predictions of Paul, in 2 Tim. iii. 1., as literally fulfilled in them. This aroused the ire of the Dominicans, who ceased not to persecute him till Alexander IV. A.D. 1256, had his book publicly burnt, and the author himself banished from France.* Peter, of Bruges, and Henry his disciple, likewise railed against clerical dereliction, and asserted, among other things, that "Monks ought to marry;" for which, the one was burnt, and the other imprisoned for life. To these might be added Nicolaus de Mazon, abbot of Moelk, in Austria; Nicolaus Dünkelspühl, a professor at Vienna, whose labours produced some reformatory discipline in several convents of Swabia and Bavaria; Dante, in Italy; Guido Juvenalis, in France, an erudite man; and others; one of the most distinguished of whom was John Wickliffe, rector of Lutterworth, whose bones, to appease the revengeful disposition of his enemies, were dug up and publicly consumed, A.D. 1428, by order of Martin V. in conjunction with the decree of the council of

* Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 564. (Soames.)
Spanheim's Eccles. Ann.

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Constance ; which iniquitous edict was executed by Richard Fleming, bishop of Lincoln.* This is not a solitary instance of the church wreaking her vengeance upon those who were bold enough to expose her enormities, and dispute her wicked assumptions. Her statement, that she is "unchanged and unchangeable" is true, so far as a malignant spirit is concerned. And she manifested the same deathless hatred to her conscientious opponents on the accession of Queen Mary to the throne of England, when, by her authority, Cardinal Pole, and other eminent divines of her communion, went to Cambridge, interdicted the churches where the bodies of Bucer and Phagius were laid, and, after a mock trial and blasphemous sentence, the remains of these noted reformers were dug up, conveyed in their coffins to the market-place, set upright, bound with iron chains, and finally consumed !

From so disgusting a portrait of the degeneracy and ungodly deportment of those who made a solemn profession, and wore the garb of sanctity, it will naturally occur to

* Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 665. (Soames.)
Spanheim's Eccles. Ann.

every unprejudiced mind, that there must be something fundamentally wrong in a church which could give birth to, foster and mature, such shameless immorality. History furnishes us with numerous records of crimes, horrifying and revolting, committed not only within the silent recesses of the cloister, but perpetrated visibly, and without any desire of concealment, by all degrees of ecclesiastics, from the humblest monk to the loftiest dignitary; not excepting even the Sovereign Pontiff who filled the chair of Peter :* and if history be not an "old almanac," we must certainly respect and credit its authority. It presents a melancholy picture of the un-

* Ratherius, bishop of Verona, says, that the clergy were in general so immodest, that scarcely a priest was found fit to be ordained bishop, and scarcely a bishop fit to confer ordination. He recounts several shocking stories respecting the behaviour of ecclesiastics, and he charges them principally with holding infamous conversation with profligate females. Pope Sergius and pope John XI., the latter son of the former by his concubine Marofia, and other pontiffs of the same description, by their own profligacy set the example to the inferior clergy, of throwing off that mask, which might otherwise conceal their debaucheries from the eyes of the world.—*Rev. Mr. O. Croly's Inquiry*, etc. Dublin, 1835.

Vide Baronii Annales (Antverpio 1603). Genebrardi Chron. A. C. 904. (Paris, 1585.)

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righteous living of those whose peculiar duty it was to practise and inculcate the pure precepts of christianity; the darkness, superstition, ignorance, and moral depravity of the universal church; and the all but total extinction of true religion. And, if the picture be faithfully drawn, must we not acknowledge—does not love for truth force upon us the conviction—that a reformation both in morals and religion was most urgently and imperatively required?

So corrupted, indeed, by formal worship and superstitious observances, was the professing church, and so signal was the developement of the “mystery of iniquity” prior to the bursting forth of the glorious sun of the Reformation, that I cannot contemplate the long night of Egyptian darkness and ignorance, the intellectual bondage and spiritual desolation, the moral depravity and unblushing wickedness, which then existed in all their hideous and naked deformity, without feeling, as did the poet, who, when entering upon his survey of the regions of despair, exclaimed:—

“ Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
Mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,

Che la diritta via era smarita :
E quanto a dir, qual' era, e così dura,
Questa selva selvaggia ed aspra e forte
Tanto e amara che poco e più morte."

DANTE INFERNO.

" When life had laboured up her midmost stage,
And, weary with her mortal pilgrimage,
Stood in suspense upon the point of Prime,
Far in a pathless grove I chanced to stray,
Where scarce imagination dares display
The gloomy scenery of the savage clime.
On the deep horrors of the tangled dale,
With dumb dismay, the pow'rs of mem'ry dwell—
Scenes terrible as dark impending fate."

BOYD'S DANTE.



CHAPTER V.

Concise History of the Franciscan Order.

“ The Franciscan fraternity was early split into factions, which time only strengthened and rendered inveterate ; and these factions not only disturbed the peace of the church, but shook even the sovereign powers and majesty of the Pontiffs themselves.” —MOSHÉIM.



HAVE now to direct the reader's attention to the celebrated order of monks, denominated Franciscan, of which St. Francis was the distinguished founder.

An attempt to compress within narrow limits all the strange incidents connected with the life of this extraordinary man, and the principal constitutions of his sodality, would not be complimentary to the several able writers who have taken pains to elucidate his history ; nor would it be doing justice to the individual himself, whose singular life has furnished them with such ample and valuable materials. So

wonderful, however, are many of the circumstances which have occurred through his instrumentality and that of his mendicant associates, that it is quite necessary to take a brief review of them, as characteristic of the memorable personage whose name and system of discipline occupy so prominent a place in the pages of history.

St. Francis was born at Assisi, in Umbria, A.D. 1182. His father, who was a wealthy merchant, had his son originally named John; but business transactions bringing the youth much into the society of Frenchmen, he acquired their language readily, and in consequence was called Franciscus. His biographers, Bonaventura and Wadding, an Irish monk, concur in representing him as an idle, debauched, and profligate young man. A serious illness, induced by his irregular and licentious habit of life,* had well nigh brought him to the threshold of the grave. Upon his recovery he exhibited a kind of religious idiotcy; and, having accidentally heard a sermon from the words, "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey," etc., he conceived

* Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 560. (Soames.)

that the absolute renunciation of all worldly goods, and the consequent condition of penury, was the only way in which to fulfil the gospel injunction. For a considerable time he roamed through the country like a madman. On one occasion he met with a leper, and dismounting from his horse, licked his sores and administered to his necessities. At another time, falling in with beggars, he distributed to them his clothes, and covered himself with their filthy rags. He fancied that he was the subject of divine visions; and one day, whilst praying near the walls of a decayed church, he heard a voice which said: "Go, Francis, and repair my house which you see is dilapidated!" Accordingly he obeyed the command; took a quantity of his father's merchandise, disposed of the same, and brought the value to the priest. This transaction displeased his father, who made an effort to arrest him as a lunatic, in which light he was considered by most of his acquaintance, although some were silly enough to regard him as a saint. By a persevering course of mendicancy he not only raised money enough to repair the old church, but to erect two others, one of which was called the church of Portiuncula, near Assisi, where he established himself and founded a

new monastic association upon very stringent and somewhat novel principles; the profession of abject poverty being a prominent feature of the Franciscan rule. To such an extreme was this carried, that a monk was not permitted to own even a psalter or hymn book. The formation of such a fraternity was regarded by the reigning pontiff, Innocent III., as admirably calculated to meet the peculiar exigencies of the church; and at the council of Lateran, he declared his approval of it, in presence of its founder.

Two years after (A. D. 1217) Cardinal Ugolino, subsequently Gregory IX., became patron of an order which, at its second general chapter, had five thousand members present. Hence originated a religious brotherhood, that finally grew so colossal and powerful as to disturb states and hurl even a pope from his dominions. The biographers of St. Francis mention, that upon one occasion, as he was praying for more conformity with Christ, he received upon his person the sacred stigmata; that is, scars, or fungus flesh, representing the five wounds of the Saviour—a deception most likely got up by the monks in order to enhance the reputation of their order, and procure a larger sale of the indulgences with which they,

and the Dominicans, were privileged by the popes for their support—having abjured all earthly riches. Benedict XII. gave his sanction to this absurd fable of the miraculous impressment, by ordaining a festival in commemoration of the event. Francis, having lived as an invalid at Assisi, for two years, died on the 4th of October, 1226; and in 1230 he was canonized, and placed in the calendar of saints, by Gregory IX.

How an order of monks such as the discalced or barefooted Franciscans, possessing few, if indeed any inducements to desert social life, and established on principles so extremely rigorous and austere, could have increased in such an extensive and rapid manner, is a subject which must assuredly produce no small degree of surprise in the minds of those who have studied its origin, and are familiar with its early history. Even the very disgrace consequent upon mendicancy, a primary and essential part of their code, one should suppose, would be an impediment quite sufficient to check the progress of such an institution. But, as a sensible writer justly remarks, “the ecclesiastics of that age had the happy art of making everything subservient to their own individual interest, as well as to

that peculiar establishment with which they were connected, that the profession of beggary, so far from being looked upon as humiliating, was regarded as an honourable, if not the most honourable of all engagements.* Moreover, to such a degree of celebrity did these monks arrive, that they ruled not merely the monastic orders of their day, but, although it may sound discordant in modern ears attuned to the doctrine of infallibility, even the very court of Rome itself.† The pontifical assemblies, as well

* Life of Buchanan.

† Not only has the Roman Pontiff's authority been considered of equal weight with that of a General Council, but it has sometimes been actually placed, not only above councils, but even the decrees of the Apostles themselves! Andradius saith :—"Liquet eos minime errasse, qui dicunt Romanum Pontificem posse non nunquam in legibus dispensare a Paulo et primis quatuor conciliis. Minime vero majores nostri religione et pietate excellentes Apostolorum hæc et quam plurima alia decreta refigere in animum induxissent nisi intellexissent," etc.—*Andrad. lib. ii., de Trid. Fid.*

"It is manifest that those have not erred who say, that the Roman Pontiff can sometimes dispense with obeying the laws of the apostle Paul, and of the four first Councils; nay, our ancestors, men of great piety and religion, have BROKEN AND ANNULLED MANY DECREES OF THE APOSTLES!"

A distinguished Cardinal of the Romish church writes:—"Si Papa erraret in præcipiendo vitia, vel prohibendo vir-

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as the councils of the state, bowed alike implicitly to their dictates, and each acquiesced in their decision.

But the pinnacle of glory to which these monks attained, and the sceptre of authority which they swayed, were but preludes to a terrible downfall ; a disaster highly aggravated by the eminence from which they fell, and the princely influence they had exercised. Neither the patronage of John XXII., nor their former popularity, could screen them from universal disapprobation and censure. Owing to the imperious and insolent manner in which, like despotic rulers, they employed their power, councils had assembled in many kingdoms and provinces of Europe, with the express design of rendering every possible op-

tutes, teneretur Ecclesia credere vitia esse bona et virtutes mala, nisi vellet contra conscientiam peccare."—*Bellar. L. iv. de Pont. f. cap. 5.*

"Should the pope err in commanding vices, and forbidding virtues, the church should be bound to believe that the *vices were good*, and the *virtues bad*, unless she would sin against conscience!"

Again, pope Innocent III. says :—"Secundum plenitudinem potestatis de jure, supra jus, possumus dispensare."—*Decret. de concess. præbend. Tit. iii., cap. proposuit.*

"We may, according to the plenitude of our power, dispense with the law, and above the law!"

position to their proceedings, and of checking the progress of their assumed dominion. In like manner, the principal ecclesiastics of the Universities of Paris and Oxford, united their combined and vigorous energies to procure the total suppression of the Franciscan order.*

Nor did opposition to these clerical despots terminate here. They and their vices were ridiculed and exposed by various eminent writers; among the most powerful of whom was the celebrated and learned Buchanan, who, according to the testimony of Le Laboureur, was himself once connected with the order. The principal works of Buchanan are the "*Somnium*," "*Alcoranus Franciscanorum*," and the "*Franciscanus*," or the "Franciscan;" the last of which, together with the Satire of Sir David Lindsay, entitled "The Three Estates," was made the subject of a drama. The former was acted before James V., and the latter in presence of the king, queen, and courtiers at Linlithgow, on the festival of the Epiphany, A.D. 1539.

Those individuals who had the moral resolution to make an *exposé* of the depravity

* Wood's Antiq. Oxon. tom. i. p. 150.

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and ungodliness of the Franciscan monks, experienced, for the most part, the dire effects of their deep-rooted malevolence. The unhappy friar Killore fell a holocaust at their demonial shrine ; while others, among whom was Buchanan, were condemned to the Inquisition.

Buchanan, accompanied by eleven others, attended the celebrated Govea to the University of Coimbra, in Portugal, in the year 1547, at this time patronised by John III., the existing monarch. Being suspected of favouring the principles of the Reformation, he, with two members of the University, was seized and brought before the tribunal of the Inquisition. Before this mock justice-seat he was privately accused of having eaten flesh-meat during Lent, of vilifying the monks, and of being altogether a dangerous and unsafe person ; whereupon he was cast into one of those infernal dungeons—upon whose portals may fitly be inscribed the epigraph of Dante—

“ Per me si va nella citta dolente :
Per me si va nell’ eterno dolore :
Per me si va tra la perduta genta.”

“ Through me you pass into the city of woe :
Through me you pass into eternal pain :
Through me among the people lost for aye.”

CANTO iii. I.

There can be no doubt but that the Portuguese ecclesiastics had heard of the severe attacks made upon the monastic orders by Buchanan ; and, therefore, they did not let the opportunity escape for gratifying their vindictive feelings. This persecuted individual, although confined for nearly two years in the Inquisition, and closely shut up for several months in a monastery, in order that he might be *edified* by the saintly deportment of its inmates, and thereby be induced to abandon his heretical opinions, yet knew not why he was deprived of his liberty, or what acts of his drew down upon him the fierce displeasure of his savage persecutors. Happily, however, he escaped the rack and the flames ; and on being finally liberated, with the consent of the king, he embarked from Lisbon for England—leaving, with feelings of inexpressible delight, a country whose very atmosphere was impregnated with the atrocities of its inhabitants ; and where men, professing to be dispensers of the oracles of God, and upholders of the christian faith, were, in truth, nothing less than propagators of the “doctrines of demons,” and supporters of the impositions of Satan.—

“*Monstrum horrendum informe horribile ingens.*”

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But to resume. The most inveterate enemies which the Franciscans had to contend with were, strange to say, the monks of St. Dominic !*

“ When Greek met Greek, then came the tug of war.”

There is so much impiety connected with the history of the Franciscans, so much cruelty with that of the Dominicans, and so much flagitious and blasphemous imposture with both, that the founders of these several orders can hardly be seen in their true characters. “ These two most powerful orders,” writes the historian, “ contended with each other for precedence ; and attacked and warred upon each other in their publications, and with invectives and criminations. Attempts were frequently made to stop these contentions ; but the fire-brand that kindled them could never be extinguished.” †

Those fiery bigots, who were the chief actors in the Inquisitional courts, and the stern dispensers of ecclesiastical rigour, pursued the Franciscans with that peculiar fero-

* Painters represent him by a dog with a fire-brand in its mouth, owing to a dream which his mother had when *enceinte*.

† Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 555-6. (Soames.)

city for which they were proverbial, until their implacable resentment became somewhat abated by consigning to the flames several of those unfortunate beings who were the objects of their displeasure. So much for the unity of the Papal church and her ecclesiastical orders ! “ Papal uniformity,” says a talented writer, “ is like the hard and glittering surface of an ice-bound chaos, dazzling without, but imprisoning all within.”* And truly there is a union in ignorance, as all things are confounded together in the dark !

At length a schism, fraught with direful consequences, took place in this distinguished fraternity. The primary cause which led to so singular a result, was a difference of opinion respecting the particular habit or dress of the order, and the extent to which its worldly possessions should be carried.

Frequent attempts were made by successive pontiffs to mitigate the severity of the constitutions of St. Francis, which were extremely rigid with regard to the possessions of the monks. But these attempts proved

* Rev. James Godkin's Guide from the Church of Rome.

unsuccessful. The order, however, in a short time, became divided into two great parties. The one opposed the jurisdiction of the pope ; the other received all his decrees, and submitted to his authority. The former were denominated Anti-papal Franciscans, and consisted of the Fratricelli, or Minorites, the Tertiaries, or Beghards, and the Spirituals. The latter were styled the Brethren of the Community. This class having the advantage of superior numbers, laboured very zealously to exterminate the Spirituals. Clement V. being then pope, was desirous to effect a reconciliation between parties so opposed ; and for this purpose he issued the bull, "*Exivi de paradiso*," which enjoined the strictest poverty on the whole order, and prohibited the possession of any property, except what was indispensable for their immediate wants ; although at the same time, it permitted those of the order who resided in districts or localities where the necessaries of life were not attainable, to erect store-houses, or granaries, to which they could resort in times of scarcity. This bull pleased the French brethren extremely well ; but as the Italian monks were determined to remain obstinate, they refused to be ruled by the

pope's mandate ; and in order to set themselves at liberty from the power and authority of their spiritual rulers, some of them evacuated their country, and went to Sicily ; while others were sent into exile by Crescentius, general of the order.*

After much labour and repeated endeavours on the part of Clement to subdue the turbulent spirit of the French Franciscans, he finally succeeded. But the tranquillity which ensued, unhappily, terminated with his life. For after the decease of this pontiff, the Franciscan war broke out afresh. Nor was there a period since the first introduction of the schism, when the interests of the two adverse bodies, the Spirituals and the Brethren of the Community, were so warmly upheld. It is truly horrifying to contemplate the dire calamities which followed. So revolting are they to the best feelings of human nature, that we would be disposed to question their reality, did not the indubitable testimony of history place them upon record as facts which cannot be disputed.

Although papal authority and influence

* Boulay. Hist. Acad. Paris, tom. iv. p. 152. Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 567. (Soames.)

were vigorously employed to quench the flame of dissension among the two generic sections of this order, it but burned the brighter, and blazed forth with increased strength and fury, in proportion to the efforts made to suppress it. At length an opportunity was afforded for giving vent to a rancour long-cherished and deep-rooted, and for exhibiting it in all its fiendish asperity. After a well concocted conspiracy, one hundred and twenty of the Spirituals suddenly came down upon, and most violently attacked the Brethren of the Community in their convents at Narbonne and Beziers, and having expelled them from their habitations by force of arms, they elected new presiding officers, cast off their well-made garments, and assumed those that were short, narrow, and ill-shaped, as being more consistent with the rule of their founder.*

So outrageous an occurrence compelled John XXII., who was Clement's successor, to issue a brief, thereby to preserve the public peace; as from the fact of the citizens of Narbonne favouring the Spirituals, the pro-

* A. D. 1314. Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 668. (Soames.)

bable result would be riot, confusion, and disorder. At length this pope succeeded in abolishing some of the lesser distinctions of the order; and after advising the king of Sicily to expel from his dominions the Spirituals, who resorted thither for self-defence, he commanded the French Spirituals to attend a council to be held at Avignon, and required that they should lay aside their short, straight habits, with the small hoods.

The papal injunction was universally acquiesced in, with the exception of twenty-four brethren, and their leader, Francis Bernard Delitiosi, who fanatically asserted, that the gospel of Christ was not more sacred, or more to be obeyed, than the rules of St. Francis; that the pontiffs who permitted the order to erect store-houses and granaries, had sinned most grievously; and that requiring a change of dress different from that prescribed by the founder, added fearfully to their weight of guilt! Hereupon, pope John, becoming exasperated to the highest degree, anathematized these dissentients, and ordered that they should be punished as heretics. Accordingly Delitiosi was apprehended, but ultimately died in confinement; while four of his followers were condemned to be burnt

at Marfeilles.* These circumstances occasioned a revival of malignity against the pope and his abettors, by the Spirituals, who denounced John XXII. as "Antichrist," and the "Man of Sin," and maintained that he should be deposed for having "shed the blood of the saints."

Such an aspect of affairs could not long continue without a change, as each party was striving for supremacy. For either the Spirituals must be the rulers, or the Roman pontiff's decrees must be obeyed. The pope, therefore, perceiving that his authority was disregarded by these obstinate and tenacious monks, and being highly offended that the term "Antichrist" was applied to him—however deserving of the appellation †—

* A. D. 1318. Argentre, *Collectio Judicior de novis error.* tom. i. p. 294.

† Pope Gregory the Great (about the year 594), in one of his letters to John Bishop of Constantinople, said:—"*Quisquis se universalem Sacerdotem vocat in elatione sua Antichristum præcurrit.*" "Whoever in his pride calls himself universal priest, is Antichrist's harbinger." Yet in a few years after (A. D. 606), his own successor assumes this very title, under the name of Boniface III., by the aid of the Emperor Phocas. Cardinal Baronius thus mentions the fact: "Phocas iratus Ciraco Episcopo Constantinopolitano adjudicavit titulum *Œcumenici Pontifici Romano soli.*"—

delivered them over to the tender mercies of their most obdurate enemies, the Dominicans, who were specially authorized and empowered to apprehend them wherever they may be found. These "indefatigable soldiers," we need scarcely inform the reader, executed the papal command with promptitude and rigour. Accordingly, several hundreds of the devoted Franciscans were condemned to the stake in France, Italy, Spain, and Germany.

The Spirituals became again aroused in consequence of the martyrdom of their brethren ; and having secured the patronage of Lewis of Bavaria, who greatly assisted the promotion of their designs, they succeeded, by repeated intrigues, in persecuting the

(Bar. ad A. D. 606.) "Phocas being incensed against Ciriacus, bishop of Constantinople, who had assumed the title, granted the title, *Sovereign Pontiff*, to the Roman Bishop." Roger Hoveden writes : "That Abbot Johachim, in conversing with Richard I. of England, and Philip II. of France, on Antichrist, said : '*Quod jam natus est in Civitate Romana et in Sede Apostolica Sublimabitur.*' " That already he was in Rome, and should be lifted up to the apostolical chair.'" (Hoved. Annal. Post. in Rich. I. p. 681.) And St. Bernard said, "That the popes were not the ministers of Christ, and that the *Apocalyptic beast* occupied the chair of St. Peter." (*Usser. de Christi. Eccl. Sur. et Stat. c. vii. secs. 5 & 6.*)

Dominicans, and depriving John XXII. of the popedom. After the death of this pontiff, succeeding popes endeavoured to reconcile these two hostile factions; but neither edicts, bulls, nor inquisitorial punishments, could effect the desired union. At length, after much entreaty, a division of the order into two bodies was unanimously agreed upon. The one was denominated the Conventual Brethren, and the other, the Brethren of the Observation. Thus, as has been ably remarked, "unity being the boasted pædium of the Romish Church, it is necessary that she should see how weak is her battle-steam, her invulnerable Achilles."

Francis was regarded by his order as a second Christ, and in every respect equal to the Divine founder of the church. These opinions were promulgated in a work, entitled, "The Golden Book of the Conformities of the Holy Father St. Francis, with the Life of our Saviour Jesus Christ;" written in 1383, by Bartholomew Albizi, a Franciscan monk, of Pisa.* Therein the author

* Lib. aureus, inscrip. lib. conform. vite beati ac seraphici patris Francisci ad vitam Jesu Christi Domini nostri, correctus et illustrat. Bononiæ, 1590.—*Nouveau Dictionnaire Hist. Crit.* tom. i. apud art. *Albizi*. p. 217.

salutes Francis with a prayer, such as is customarily addressed to the Redeemer; first, presumptuously calling him "typical Jesus," and then beseeching him to cure the sins, to heal the spiritual maladies of souls, and finally to give unto them a place in the kingdom of heaven.* He also enumerates forty points of resemblance between Christ and St. Francis, in which the marks of wounds on his person are included; but these were multiplied in 1651, in a work written by a Spanish monk, to four thousand! Even Pierre d'Olive, a native of Serignan, in Languedoc, who had acquired a shining reputation for his learning, sanctity, and writings, and who sharply and openly censured the corruption of the church of Rome, in his "Postilla," partook so much of the extravagances of the age in which he lived, as to believe that Francis was wholly and entirely transformed into the person of Christ!† The bones of this weak enthusiast

* Francisce Jesu typice dux formaq.; minorum, per te Christi mirifice sunt gesta, et donor. Mala pater egregie propelle animorum sedis nobis perpetuas da regni supernorum.—*Nouv. Dict. Hist. Christ.*

† Totum Christo configuratum.—*Litera Magistrorum de Postilla Fratris P. Jch. Oliwi*, in Baluzii *Miscel.* tom i. p 213.

were raised by order of John XXII., and publicly burnt with his writings, in 1325.*

I cannot more fitly close the present subject, than by referring the reader to what a reformed Romist priest writes respecting these mendicant monks. He observes, that their "austerity, mortification, and holiness were merely exterior; for the coarse, dirty, disgusting habit and cowl of the filthy Franciscan, served to cover an indulged and well-pampered body. And these worthies were accustomed to riot, and 'drown dull care' in their jovial convents as well as the lord of the soil, or the pope himself. As to piety or edification, their cloisters exhibited quite the contrary. They were generally scenes of licentiousness, contention, mutual jealousy, bickering and disorder. And even at this day there is scarcely to be found a single man of spirit or talent in the community of these stupid, ignorant, worthless, over-bearing drones."† This severe and cutting rebuke is not ill-bestowed, judging from my own personal knowledge of members of the Franciscan fraternity.

* Raynald, ad. An. 1325, sect. xx.

† Papal Impositions and Monastic Intrigue portrayed, by the Rev. M. Brennan.



CHAPTER VI.

Legendary Writings.

“The Greeks led the way in committing to writing whatever reports were in circulation among the vulgar in regard to more ancient times, without discrimination ; and hence originated those medleys of fables, which the Latins afterwards so greedily caught up and retained.”—*MOSHEIM.*



SINCE Chrysostom observes that, “a fine lie is a fine thing!” a principle which, if not strictly correct in morals, has nevertheless been very generally adopted by Metaphraſtes, Bollandus, and contemporary writers of the ſame theological ſchool. One great object in view was to uphold and extend the popularity of the ſeveral religious orders. And how could this have been better or more ſucceſsfully accompliſhed, than by publiſhing fictitious biographies of ſome of the fraternity, and therein recording the dubious aſterity of their lives and the numerous

miracles they had performed? The multitude were but too eager to receive, and too willing to accredit, all that interested parties had averred concerning Brother Bonaventura or Father Paul: and no matter how loosely or irreligiously they may have lived, they were sure after death to be lauded as patterns of the severest virtue and the most eminent sanctity. This pious fraud was partly occasioned in consequence of premiums being offered to those who, upon the decease of a brother, should produce the most elaborate and exaggerated history of the holy life he led, and the extraordinary wonders he effected. Hence monkish biographers set no bounds either to the fervour of their description or their violation of truth. And as one order vied with the other in seeking the popular apotheosis, so they laboured to rival each other in the number and holiness of their fainted brethren. The consequence is, that in the whole *Acta Sanctorum* scarce one individual is recorded who did not belong to some religious fraternity. The absurdities related of these saints baffle all description. Only imagine our being informed of St. Benedict, that his mill, when he went from it to his devotions, would turn of its own accord;

and that when a monk inquisitively peeped through a crevice to view the miracle, he was immediately struck blind for his presumption !* Superstition and ignorance so obtained that there was a kind of necessity, so to speak, for such legendary tales ; as no faint could be estimated by the common people, if his life was not read, or else miracles recorded of him.† The monks, from self-interested motives, administered to the popular taste, however perverted ; and of which they themselves had been the main creators. Sometimes these godly men would perform dexterous and cunning feats which, to the inexperienced observer, appeared miraculous. But they were simply effected by natural phenomena. For example, Mandubnæuc, an Irish monk, of Rosevalley, carried off the bees of that place to Ireland, on board the ship in which he embarked ; but, of course, this plausible miracle was accomplished by secreting the queen bee.‡ When impositions were really practised the deceivers did not always escape re-

* Mabillon's *Acta Sanctor.* Ord. Bened. tom. iii. p. 195.

† Script. p. Bed. 168 b.

‡ Ang. Sacr. ii. 636.

tribution, however successfully they may have eluded detection. Perat relates, that there was a miraculous fountain at Moissac, to which numerous lepers came to bathe, and they were restored to health by the efficacy of some saint whose relics were deposited in the abbey. Unfortunately, the monks had the disease communicated to them by the lepers, and a great many died, so that they had to shut up the fountain for their repose and health ! *

“ Alas, what follies,” says Erasmus, commenting on the abuses which crept into the church, “ follies at which even I myself can scarcely help blushing ! Do we not see each country laying claim to its particular demi-god ? Each misery has its saint and its candle. This one relieves you in tooth-ache ; that one gives assistance at child-birth ; a third restores your stolen goods ; a fourth saves you in shipwreck ; and a fifth keeps watch over your flocks. Some of these are all-powerful in many things at once. This is particularly the case with the Virgin, the mother of God, to whom the vulgar attribute almost more than to her Son. In

* Chronique notices, et supr. vii. 12.

the midst of all these follies, if some odious sage arise, and, giving a counter note, exclaim, (as in truth he may,) ‘ You will not perish miserably if you live as christians. You will redeem your sins, if to the money which you give you add hatred of the sins themselves, tears, vigils, prayers, fastings, and a thorough change in your mode of life. You shall not befriend you if you imitate his life.’ If some sage, I say, charitably duns such words into their ears, Oh ! of what felicity does he not deprive their souls, and into what trouble, what despondency, does he not plunge them ! The mind of man is so constituted, that imposture has a much stronger hold upon it than truth. If there is any saint more fabulous than another, for instance, a St. George, a St. Christopher, or a St. Barbara, you will see them adored with much greater devotion than St. Peter, St. Paul, or Christ himself.”*

The poison so insidiously instilled into the minds of the credulous devotees of the Romish church, under pretence of administering to them edifying and pious instruction, may be extracted from the following select flowers, culled from the garden of scholastic theology :—

* *Eccomium Morizæ*, op. iv. pp. 444—450.

In the "Constitutions" of the abbot Benedict we read : that after supper the brethren were to assemble, and some one of them was to read aloud from the Collations of Cassian, or the Lives of the Fathers, or some other edifying book, but not the Pentateuch, nor the other books of the Old Testament ; as this famous man was of opinion that it would not be profitable for persons of ordinary understanding to hear them.* Such a mode of infusing into weak minds her deleterious teaching, is quite in character with a church that will not bear the light, nor allow her doctrines to be brought to the bar of Scripture or reason. She opens wide to the enthusiastic gaze of her votaries the productions of heated imaginations and fertile fancies, replete with all kinds of delusive vanities and

*. Mais pourquoi défendre la lecture de ces livres avant complenes ? C'est apparemment parce qu'il s'y rencontre certaines histoires qui peuvent laisser dans l'esprit des impressions qui pourroient revenir et inquieter les Religieux pendant le sommeil. Peut-être, aussi parce que ces histoires des guerres de Josué, des Juges, et des Rois frappent trop vivement l'imagination, et remuent trop les passions. C'est, dit on, pour cette dernière raison, qu' Ulphilas, Evêque des Goths, ne voulut pas traduire en sa langue les Livres des Rois, de peur d'allumer de plus en plus la passion de ces peuples, qui n'étoit déjà que trop grande pour la guerre.—*Calmes.*

dangerous deceits, and closes on them the word of God ; and uttering an anathema, from which there lies no appeal, against all who would presume to open its illuminated pages, or judge of its contents, she seals it up for ever from their view ;* asserting, that it is dark and obscure, and unprofitable for the people.†

As another specimen of legendary literature, I insert a curious story from the writings of a distinguished modern prelate and saint :—" It is related, that Jane, the venerable sister of Jesus and Mary, of the order of St. Francis, while she was on one occasion meditating on the infant Jesus persecuted by Herod, heard a loud noise, as if some one were pursued by armed soldiers. A most beautiful infant, overwhelmed with affliction, and flying from his

* Prohibemus etiam, ne libros Veteris Testamenti aut Novi, laici permittantur habere ; nisi forte psalterium, vel breviarium pro divinis officiis, aut horas beatæ Mariæ, aliquis ex devotione habere velit. Sed ne præmissos libros habeant in vulgari translatos, arctissimè inhibemus.—*Concil. Tolosan. P. Gregory LX. an. ch. 1229. Pbil. Labbæi et Gab. Cossartii*, tom. xi. pars. 1. *Lutetiæ Parisiorum*, 1671.

† Conc. Trid. Sess. iv. Decret. de Can. Scrip. Bellar. de verbo Dei, lib. iv. cap. 3. Ind. libr. prohibet. Regula iv.

enemies, instantly appeared, and said to her, ' My dear sister Jane, assist and save me ! I am Jesus of Nazareth, and am flying away from sinners who seek to take away my life, and persecute me with more cruelty than Herod did. Do you save me ! ' " *

The following circumstance is recorded of St. Philip Neri, founder of the Congregation of Priests :—" About the year 1555, when Philip, who had many followers, journeyed to the place where are the baths of Diocletian, he saw standing upon a wall, which had fallen down from age, the devil, in the form of a man ; and when he observed him more closely, he beheld him at one time appear as a youth, and presently afterwards as an old man. Hence discovering the tricks of the devil, he ordered him in the name of Christ to reveal himself. Overcome by this, the evil one betook himself to flight ; and as he departed he filled the place with so offensive a smell, that even the beasts could not tolerate it, and thus made it evident to Philip and the other spectators who he was." †

* Ap. P. Genov. Dol. di Maria.—Liguori's Dis. p. 153.

† Acta Sanctorum Maii., tom. vi. Antverpiæ, 1688. Die Vigesima Sexta Maii.

In the "Life of St. Andrew Salus," we are presented with a still more ludicrous treat :—" When it was dark, and Andrew, who was watching about the middle of the night, secretly offered up in the sanctuary of his heart prayers and vows to God and the blessed martyr, a devil suddenly came to him, surrounded with many other devils, and bearing in his hand an axe ; whilst of the other devils some were furnished with daggers, others with clubs, some with swords and lances, others with ropes, and all fought under that dragon or serpent who was the commander, about whom they frequently assembled to the dismay of the blessed Andrew. Attended, therefore, with these companions, and raising a loud shout, that most wicked devil, who assumed the form of an Æthiop, rushed upon the saint with great fury, as if about to strike him with the axe which he held in his hand. But the blessed youth, raising his hands to the Lord, with many tears, preferred the following petition, '*Sancte Joannes theologe, opitulare mihi !*' ' O holy John, the theologian, succour me !' Immediately it thundered on high, and there were voices, as if proceeding from a crowd. And behold an old man appeared, remarkable by the great-

ness of his body and eyes, and rather bald, with his face shining above the sun, surrounded with a great multitude, to whom he said in an angry tone, 'shut the doors, for no one shall escape from our hands.' And all the Moors being thus shut in, one of them whispered in the ear of his companions, '*Væ nobis, quia Joannes ille, ut vehemens imprimis est, gravissima nobis, tormenta infliget.*' 'Woe to us, for that John, who is a most violent fellow, will inflict upon us the most acute torments.' But that venerable old man, when at his command his companions had taken off the chain from the blessed Andrew's neck, and had given it to him, going to the outer door, stood there, and ordered them to bring to him the Moors, one by one. Then he ordered the first to be extended on the ground, and he tripled the blessed Andrew's chain, and thus inflicted nearly one hundred blows upon the wretch, who cried out, after the fashion of a man, 'Mercy, mercy, mercy!' When he had done this, he ordered another to be extended, who was treated precisely in the same manner. Meanwhile the blessed Andrew, when he heard this pitiable cry for mercy, could not help laughing! But when they were dismissed thus beaten, the com-

panions of John cried out saying to each of them, 'Depart and tell those things, if you will, to your father Satan.'"*


"In the 'Cistercian Chronicles' it is related that, in passing through a wood, a monk of Brabente, who was travelling on Christmas-night, heard a noise which resembled the groans of a new-born infant. He went to the place from whence the cries proceeded, and saw a beautiful babe in the midst of the snow, trembling with cold and bathed in tears. Touched with pity, the religious instantly dismounted, and approaching the infant, said: 'O, my child! why are you so abandoned in this snow, to weep and die?' The infant answered: 'Alas! how can I but weep when I see myself so deserted by all, and find that no one receives, or takes compassion on me?' After these words the infant disappeared, giving the religious to understand, that by this vision he wished to reprove the ingratitude of men, who, while they see him born in a cave for their sake, leave him to weep without pity for his sufferings."†

I have now to direct the reader's attention

* Collarium ad Diem 28. Maii. Vita S. Andreæ Sali.

† St. Liguori's Dis. and Med. trans. from the Italian.

to a remarkable incident in the life of the abbess St. Theresa, a Spanish lady of noble birth, as recorded by herself. In her autobiography, a work stamped with the high approval of the College of Censors, she states, that on one occasion, while performing her wonted devotions, she was, by some supernatural agency suddenly thrust into hell, the entrance to which she describes as resembling that of an oven. She continues her strange narrative in a mingled strain of the melancholy and the ridiculous ; and concludes by affirming, that she positively laboured under no delusion, but was really in the dark prison of Hades, and that during her detention she endured such excruciating agony, as no human language could describe, or mortal tongue utter. After the liberation of this fainted heroine from the regions of despair, several physicians who examined her person, gave their testimony to the peculiar physiological change which was wrought on her body, by means of some unknown torture. Much doubt, however, prevailed at the time, as to the certainty of Theresa's statements. However, all incredulity became finally removed ; and bishops, cardinals, and popes, received the entire tale, as a truth worthy of being



accredited. And to complete the farce, the deluded subject of this famous imposture was actually canonized and declared a saint !

The “ Life of St. Theresa, written by herself,” from which I have gleaned the preceding myth, is a production of high repute, although, strange to say, but few copies are extant in this country ; the cause of which is sufficiently obvious not to require explanation. I well remember that when a novice I was prohibited from perusing this book, notwithstanding my ardent desire to be enriched by its lore ; possibly, as those who had the responsibility of my training considered that, at so early a stage of my noviciate, it would be productive of evil rather than good for me to scan its pages or learn its contents. Thus my acquaintance with Theresa’s life was reserved for a more remote period, when I should become fully indoctrinated into all the absurdities, mysteries, mysticisms, and deceptions of my profession.

I shall now furnish the reader with a narrative of an estatica, the subject of which was St. Rita, of Roccha Porrenna Cassia, in Umbria, a nun of the Augustinian order. The account is taken from the Roman Breviary ; a considerable portion of which

monks and priests are obliged, under pain of incurring the severest censures of the church, to recite daily for their spiritual edification and instruction :—

“ On a certain day, whilst the saint was more earnestly praying to the image of Christ hanging from the cross, a thorn from the crown of the crucifix was so struck through her forehead, that she suffered an incurable wound till her death ; from which, in addition to her keenest sense of pain, a foul corruption issued. From whence, lest it should excite disgust in the sisters, she lived a recluse with God. But in the secular year, being forbidden by Antistita to go to Rome with the other sisters on account of the deformity of the ulcer, she grew well on a sudden upon wiping the wound, which however on her return home broke out again. After some time, being attacked with heavy sickness, she bore it most patiently for four years, at which time a blooming rose from a small garden, in a very rough winter, and two very fresh figs were brought to her. Now being near her death, she heard Christ the Lord, together with the blessed Virgin, calling her to the kingdom of heaven. And so, having received all the sacraments of the

church, she slept in the Lord, on the eleventh of the kalends of June, in the year after the birth of Christ, 1443. Her body, to this day uncorrupted, fragrant with the sweetest odour, is piously worshipped. Urban VIII. added her to the number of the saints, conspicuous by her miracles before and after her death.”*

The following amusing anecdote of a fatanic apparition being vanquished by the abbot, St. Walthen, is quoted from the *Acta Sanctorum* :—

“ When upon a certain occasion St. Walthen stood praying before the great altar, with his eyes and hands raised to heaven, the evil spirit transfigured himself into many shapes. He first ran about the pavement in the form of a mouse, playing many antics ; afterwards in the shape of a grunting pig ; afterwards in the form of a black dog, barking ; afterwards of a howling wolf ; and lastly, of a roaring, long-horned bull. But the saint caused all these illusory forms to vanish, by making the sign of the cross. At last, that spirit, who has a thousand artifices, and who in a thousand ways endeavours to

* Rom. Brev. Vern. Par. p. 735. Ed. Libb. 1786.

disturb quiet hearts, exhibited himself in the form of a great soldier in armour, sitting upon the back of a horrible horse with a whale's hide, which emitted fire and smoke from its nostrils and mouth, and shook his lance against the man who was praying. The saint jumping up as fast as he could by the impulse of the Spirit, and going to the altar, reverentially took up the ivory pix,* which contained the holy body of the Lord, and signing himself with it, and running like a second David against the infernal Goliath, and inventing a new name for him, under the dictation of the Spirit, said :—' Behold, O execrable mouse, O terrible soldier, thou satellite of Satan, thy Judge is about to send thee into hell : wait for him if thou darest !' Overcome by this speech, the infernal horseman disappeared." †

We are likewise informed that, on one occasion, when St. Dominic was " sitting at a window with many of his brethren, and was preaching to the sisterhood, the enemy of mankind, in the likeness of a sparrow,

* The vessel wherein the consecrated wafer is tabernacled.

† *Acta Sanctorum. Vita S. Waltheri Abbatis. Dei Tertia Augusti, tom. i. p. 264.*

flying over the sisters in the air, but so near the ground that you might lay hold of him, interrupted the preaching, which when the saint perceived, he said to sister Maximilla, 'Rise and lay hold of him, and bring him to me.' She rising took him without any difficulty, and gave him through the window to the holy man. But he began hastily to pluck his feathers off, saying, 'O thou enemy ! O thou enemy !' And when he had plucked all his feathers off, the devil meanwhile crying out lamentably, and all those present laughing at him, Dominic cast him out, saying, 'Depart, thou enemy of the human race, fly now, if thou canst !'

"It happened there also, that this man of God, who had watched till the middle of the night in prayer, departing from the church, wrote by candlelight, sitting at the head of his dormitory. And behold the devil appearing in the form of a monkey, began strutting about before him, making ridiculous gestures with grimaces. Then the saint beckoned to him to stand still, giving him a lighted candle to hold before him ; and he, although he held it, continued to make his grimaces. Meanwhile the candle was finished, and began to burn the monkey's fingers,

and he began to lament as if tortured by the flame, whereas he who burns in the flames of hell ought not to fear a bodily flame. But the saint beckoned him to stand still. Why should I say more? He stood there until the whole of his forefinger was burnt down to the socket, crying out more and more loudly from the torture. Thus the man of God, strong in faith, having taken him in who sought to impose upon him, gave him a sharp blow with a cane, which he always carried with him, saying, 'Depart, thou wicked man;' and the blow sounded as if he had struck a dry bladder full of wind. Upon this, casting himself against the nearest wall, he disappeared, leaving behind him an ill odour, which discovered who he was. Sister Cæcilia, a girl aged seventeen, first received the habit of the order from the hand of the holy father Dominic. She beheld with her eyes, and heard with her ears, and faithfully narrated the things which are related."*

The following legend is told by Mervin Archdall, on the authority of Joceline:—

* *Acta Ampliora S. Dominici Confessoris. Die quartâ Augusti. c. xiii.*

“ St. Patrick had a staff covered with gold, and set with precious stones, called the staff of Jesus. The history of this celebrated staff, is briefly this : St. Patrick, moved by divine instinct or angelic revelation, visited one Justus, an ascetic who inhabited an island in the Tyrrhene Sea (part of the Mediterranean Sea on the Tuscan coast), a man of exemplary virtue and most holy life. After mutual salutations and discourse, he presented the Irish apostle with a staff, which he averred he had received from the hands of Jesus Christ himself. In this island were some men in the bloom of youth, and others who appeared aged and decrepit. St. Patrick conversing with them, found that those aged persons were sons of those seemingly young. Astonished at this miraculous appearance, he was told, that from their infancy they had served God, that they were continually employed in works of charity, and their doors ever open to the traveller and distressed ; that one night a stranger, with a staff in his hand, came to them, whom they accommodated to the best of their power ; that in the morning he blessed them, and said, ‘ I am Jesus Christ whom you have always faithfully served, but last night you received me

in my proper person :’ he then gave his staff to their spiritual father, with directions to deliver it to a stranger, named Patrick, who would shortly visit them ; on saying this he ascended into heaven, and left us in that state of juvenility in which you behold us, and our sons, then young, are the old decrepit persons you now see. Joceline goes on to relate that with this staff our apostle collected every venomous creature in the island to the top of the mountain of Cruagh Phadring, in the county of Mayo, and from thence, precipitated them into the ocean.” *

We are informed by an historian of no mean standing, that after the decease of Thomas à Becket, the arrogant and disaffected archbishop of Canterbury, “ it pleased the Lord Jesus Christ to irradiate his glorious martyr with many miracles, that it might appear to all the world he had obtained a victory suitable to his merits. None who approached his sepulchre in faith returned without a cure. For strength was restored to the lame, hearing to the deaf, sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, health to lepers, and life to the dead. Nay, not only men

* *Monasticon Hibernicum*, p. 150.

and women, but even birds and beasts, were raised from death to life.”* It is likewise asserted, that, on being exposed to view in the church before his sepulture, he arose out of his coffin, and lighted the wax tapers which were on the altar; and that after the “*requiem*” was chanted for the repose of his soul, he held up his hand to bless the assembly. Although fifty years after the death of Becket it was the subject of a public dispute at the University of Paris, whether he was in heaven or in hell—so ambiguous a point was his sanctity: some asserting that for his extreme pride he deserved to be damned—yet we find that in the year 1420, not fewer than fifty thousand foreigners, of all ages and sexes, made a pilgrimage to his renowned shrine, which was enriched with a prodigious quantity of precious gems. One of immense value, supposed to be the most splendid in Europe, was offered at his tomb by Louis VII. of France, when he made a pilgrimage thereto.†

I have just laid before the reader a speci-

* Matt. Par. p. 87.

† Rapin's Hist. Engl. vol. i. p. 232 (fol. ed.) Burnet's Hist. Reform. book iii.

men of monkish legendary writings, selected for the most part, from a work bearing the sacred impress of the Vatican, namely, Mabillon's *Acta Sanctorum*—that most preposterous of all apocryphal compilations! It requires no comment whatever to ascertain the inevitable tendency of such a production as that from which I quote; although upon the testimony of Alban Butler, the famous compiler thereof, “whether we consult reason, authority, or experience, we may boldly affirm, that except the sacred writings no book has reclaimed so many sinners, or formed so many holy men to virtue as that of the *Lives of the Saints*!”* But this gratuitous assertion must assuredly be also regarded as apocryphal. He moreover states, on the testimony of St. Austin, “that two courtiers were moved on the spot to forsake the world and become fervent monks, by accidentally reading the life of St. Anthony; that St. John Columbin, from a rich, covetous, and passionate nobleman, was changed into a saint, by casually perusing the life of St. Mary of Egypt; that a Marshal of France owed his conversion to the reading of the

* Preface to the *Lives of the Saints*.

life of St. Francis Borgia; and that Dr. Palafax, bishop of Osma, in his preface to the fourth tome of the letters of St. Theresa, relates, "that an eminent Lutheran minister at Bremen, famous for several books which he had published against the Catholic church, purchased the autobiography of that saint, with a view of attempting to confute it; but by attentively reading it over, was converted to the Catholic faith!"

"O for delusion. O for error still!"

That prepotency which Alban Butler claims for the biography of Romish saints, a modern French divine demands for cloistral establishments. Employing vain taunts with reference to Protestant England, he boastfully exclaims:—"Your Universities and Societies of the learned have produced a number of men of rare merit and extensive genius—the Newtons, the Lockes, the Addison, the Clarkes, the Sherlocks, the Louths, the Lardners, the Kennicots, the Paleys, the Broughams, etc. But is it not worthy of remark, that these Protestant schools of learning never produced a John of Matha,—a Peter of Nolasco,—a Bernard of Menthon,—a Peter of Betancourt,—or a

Vincent of Paula?"* This enthusiastic abbé certainly should have completed the noble phalanx by adding—an Anthony of Caba,—a Mecarius of Alexandria,—a Simeon Stylites,—and a Francis of Affifi! However, the wonder is that in sober-minded, practical England, a party should be found so bedazzled and bedizzened as to look for piety from so corrupt and corrupting a source. But there is no accounting for such idiosyncrasy of religious taste. For our own part we do not envy its possessors. "'Tis pitiful; 'tis wondrous pitiful!" But, perhaps, like other delusions, this too may be short-lived, and "like the baseless fabric of a vision, leave not a wreck behind."

* *Vide* Nuns and Monastic Institutes, published by the Catholic Institute of Great Britain—a corporation for some years defunct.



CHAPTER VII.


The principal Monastic Orders existing in Great Britain and Ireland—The Vows and Internal Discipline of the “ Religious.”

“ The Court of Rome had a leading self-interested object in every one of its institutions, of which that of monastic orders was not the least powerful or conspicuous. Not a prince in Europe has such a regularly constituted body of *Gens d’armes* as has the pope in these several orders ; all devoted to his cause, and obliged by their *vows* to maintain his arrogant power and authority.”—REV. M. BRENNAN.



Enter upon an account of the numerous monastic orders—“ black, white, and grey, with all their trumpery”—established in this and the sister country, would exceed our intended limits as well as prove uninteresting to the general reader. Hence, let it suffice to draw attention to, and remark upon, a few of the most prominent, popular, and powerful.

The Cistercian order, of which there is a flourishing establishment at Mount Mellary, in Ireland, and another at Charnwood Forest, Leicestershire, was originally founded towards the close of the xith century, by Robert, abbot of Molesme, in Burgundy, a province of France, who being utterly unable to revive the decaying and dissolute spirit and discipline of his monastery, retired, with about twenty of the monks, to Citeaux (Cistercium), in the diocese of Chalons,—at that time a wild and barren wilderness,—where he and his associates observed the rules of St. Benedict with scrupulous exactness and rigour. This order progressed in so wonderful a manner, that during the following century it was propagated throughout several parts of Europe. So great indeed was the fame of its members, that they not only received the most costly and munificent presents and endowments, but were actually assigned the privileges of a spiritual republic; and, in civil as well as ecclesiastical matters, acquired a governing power over every kingdom within the precincts of which they had established themselves. The progress of this order exceeded that of all other monastic institutes. And in less than a century after its foundation



it boasted of nearly two thousand religious houses.*

Those members of the Cistercian order, who planted themselves in Ireland, were, several years ago, driven from France, having previously endured imprisonment, and suffered many and severe privations. Landing on the shores of hospitable Ireland—whose inhabitants are proverbial for a readiness to shelter the children of misfortune, and to succour the oppressed and destitute—they speedily gained the affections, and found an asylum in the homes, of the humble peasantry, who sympathised with these exiles, more especially as being members of a common faith. Shortly after their arrival, the wandering monastics, headed by their superior the Right Rev. Dr. Ryan, fixed their habitation on a wild and mountainous part of a southern district, where they laboured under numerous disadvantages, and felt the bad effects of a moist and humid atmosphere, so different from the continental climate. Several of the monks were subsequently dispersed through-

* Mosheim's *Eccles. Hist.* vol. ii. p. 357. (Soames.)
 Mabillon's *Annales Benedictines*, vols. v. and vi. Pier le Nain's *Essai de l'Histoire de l'Ordre des Citeaux*. Paris : 1696.

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out England and the sister isle, with the view of collecting funds for the erection of a monastery, which would exceed in splendour any other edifice dedicated to cloistered purposes. Having by this means realised a sufficient sum, a splendid monument of monasticism was raised at Mount Mellary, in the county of Waterford, where the brotherhood now reside under the presidency of a mitred abbot.* Sir Richard Keane, the lord of the

* An election of an abbot took place on Thursday, January 29th, 1846. The bishop presided as legate of the Holy See; Very Rev. Dr. Burke, notary, and the Very Rev. Drs. O'Brien, Fogarty, and Hally, witnesses, as required by the constitutions of the order. The most strict and severe caution was observed on the part of those voting and those that received the votes.

At the close of the scrutiny, the announcement was made to the anxiously awaiting brothers, that Father Mary Joseph Ryan, of Clonmel, was unanimously elected their future abbot. With joy on their countenances, and thanksgiving on their tongues, the holy brotherhood could scarce contain themselves, because of the happiness they felt at the appointment of such a great and good man. The abbot elect was then introduced into his place in the choir, while the monastery bells were pealing forth the joy of the happy inmates. On entering the church, the "Te Deum" was chanted by the responsive choir in thanksgiving to God, whose Holy Spirit was invoked, and directed the choice just made. Here he was confirmed in his new capacity by having the crozier put into his hand; a very interesting ceremony. From the

manor, granted for the site of the building a large tract of mountain-land, comprising above five hundred acres, at a nominal rent. Much merit is really due to the monks for the persevering industry with which they have cultivated so large and barren a waste, upon which no herbage previously grew. Now schools are erected, the soil is made productive, and altogether the place looks as if it had been touched by the wand of the enchanter.

The Cistercian order is considered inferior to none but the Carthusian,—so called from *Chartreux*, near Grenoble, in Dauphine,—which was instituted A. D. 1084, by Bruno, a native of Cologne, and canon of the Cathedral of Rheims. “This zealous ecclesiastic,” observes the historian, “who had neither power to reform, nor patience to bear, the dissolute manners of his archbishop, Manasse, retired from his church, with six of his companions, and having obtained the permission of Hugh, bishop of Grenoble, fixed his residence in a miserable desert. He adopted at first the rule of St.

choir he was conducted by the bishop through the church into the chapter-room, and installed in the abbatial throne, where he is in future to guide and govern this holy and truly perfect community.—*The Tablet*.

Benedict, to which he added a considerable number of severe and rigorous precepts. His successors, however, went still farther, and imposed upon the Carthusians new laws, much more intolerable than those of their founder ; laws which inculcated the highest degrees of austerity that the most gloomy imagination could invent. And yet, notwithstanding all this, it is remarkable, that no monastic society degenerated so little from the severity of its primitive institution and discipline, as that of the Carthusians.”*

The Trappists derive their name from La Trappe, situate on the borders of Perche and Normandy, in which locality Routrou, Count du Perche, in order to fulfil a vow made by him when in danger of being shipwrecked, founded an establishment of the order, A. D. 1140.† With reference to the discipline enjoined by the Cistercian constitutions, it will be sufficient to confine my remarks to a delineation of its most prominent features.

The monks of this order are divided into two classes ; namely, choir-religious, and lay-brothers. The former are either priests, or

* Mosheim's *Eccles. Hist.* vol. ii. Heylot's *Hist. des Ordres*, tom. vii. p. 366.

† *Memoirs of Count D'Auvergne.*

candidates for the priesthood, although there are some among them, who, from affected humility, would not accept so exalted a position. The choir-monks wear *white* habits or tunics, with an additional garment attached, which covers the head. At the various canonical hours they chant the service of the church, in the choir of the chapel attached to their monastery. They take the first place in the refectory and dormitory, and are allowed certain other privileges, needless to mention, which are denied to the subordinate members of the community.

The lay-brothers, for the most part, are a class of vulgar and illiterate persons, being distinguished from the choir-religious by a *brown* habit and hood which descends so low as almost to conceal their faces from observation. These individuals do not assist in the Latin office, but as a substitute recite, or more properly mutter over, a number of *paters* and *aves*, which they reckon on their many-stringed beads—the only mode of performing devotional exercises practised by the ignorant of the papacy, for which cause Man-tuan has very justly styled their religion—

“ Religionem,
Quæ filo infertis numerat sua murmura baccis ;”

or “a religion that numbers their murmurs by berries filed upon a string.” Might not this kind of prayer be truly likened to the *Βαττολογία*, or vain repetitions of the Gentiles,* which Christ condemned, and against which he cautions his followers?—“When ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye, therefore, like unto them.”†

The lay-brothers perform the drudgery of the kitchen, and act generally in the capacity of servants; but are under precisely the same discipline, in most other respects, as the choir-monks. Each brother has a *mat* for a couch, which accommodation, trifling as it is, was denied on the Continent. The entire community rise at the early hour of one in the morning, and are spared the inconvenience of dressing by rarely taking off their clothes. They assist at and celebrate several masses each day; have long mental and vocal devotional exercises; wear hair-cloth next their skin; work much in the fields; keep *perpetual*

* Ohe, jam define Deos, uxor gratulando obtundere;
Nisi illos tuo ex ingenio judicas,
Set nihil credas intelligere, nisi idem dictum est centies.

Terence, Heauton, act v. scene i.

† Matt. vi. 7, 8.

silence, expressing their wants but by signs ; observe two Lenten seasons in the year ; partake of neither flesh nor fish, at their scanty meals, which generally are composed of little more than coarse brown bread, prepared by themselves ; and mutually administer the “ discipline,” or flagellation, on each successive Friday—an act of penance rendered if not more severe, at least more meritorious, by the solemn recital of the psalm “ *Miserere mei Deus,*” during the painful and sometimes bloody operation.* A grave is always in readiness to receive as a tenant within its chill embrace the last remains of him, who by protracted and extreme voluntary suffering, hastens his approach to that final lodgment ; and occasionally the poor monk is sent to meditate, for half-an-hour together, over the yawning sepulchre. When one of the fraternity comes to die, he is laid upon a bed of ashes spread on the ground in the form of a cross !

* This mode of torture, like most of the other puerile and wicked practices in the Romish church, is of pagan origin. The priests of Baal, like the Cistercians, had the practice among them of whipping, lacerating, and scourging themselves, until the blood came ; and the priests of the goddess Cybele, or Bellona, were wont to cut themselves with knives and lancets.—*Piçlet. Huit Sermons sur l'Examen des Religions*, p. 261. edit. Genève. 1716.

At a later period the Cistercian monks established themselves at Charnwood Forest, near Loughborough, Leicestershire, where they have erected a magnificent and spacious monastic structure. Singular enough, on this very ground once stood the Cistercian abbey of Garendon, which, with similar institutions, was dissolved under Henry VIII. The site of the new convent, not seventeen years since, presented to the traveller a wild, hilly, and desolate region, with scarce any appearance of vegetable life. Now, the whole adjoining country is reclaimed, and exhibits, especially in autumn, an aspect of cheerfulness and luxuriance. A naked and sterile soil has been reduced to cultivation and fertility. Fruits, corn, and other produce of the first description, are grown around these cloistered walls, and yield in the neighbouring markets the highest prices. Here may be observed all the paraphernalia appertaining to the best farm-house—a cow-house, a dairy, a forge, a mill, a bake-house, and even a brewery; all placed under the vigilant superintendence of the brothers. On the farm may be observed the choir-religious, divested of his flowing habit, in plain working costume, like those of inferior grade, who for the most part

have all their lives been accustomed to manual toil, delving the ground and cheerfully labouring as the others, apparently resigned to the will—not of Heaven certainly, but of his superior and his rule ! There is a guest-room set apart for the reception of strangers, who are kindly and hospitably entertained irrespective of their religious creed. Upon the visitor's arrival he is immediately conducted by the guest-master to the chapel. From thence he is led to the reception-room. During supper some portion of an entertaining book is read aloud ; and at an appointed hour each guest is shown to a simple, yet comfortable sleeping apartment, which consists of a bed, a kneeling-desk, a chair or two, some books, and a common deal table, with conveniences for writing.

It is really an extraordinary sight to observe an order of Cistercian monks in England at this stage of our civilization. To see an abbey remarkable for its architectural design and perfect in all its interior ramifications, with its abbot, prior,* sub-prior, and chapter, com-

* The prior was often at the head of a great monastic foundation : many of these also had a place in the higher house of parliament. Sometimes the prior ruled an abbey

prising brethren lettered and unlettered, noble and plebeian, priests and laics, all bound by vows, adopting the most stringent monastic rules, and living in apparent harmony and simplicity, watching, praying, fasting, toiling in the fields; and thus passing dreary and dreadful years of a strange and unnatural existence. This order was never regarded as dangerous to either the civil or religious powers—which caused Napoleon to say of its members: “*Des hommes qui travaillent beaucoup et qui mangent peu, et par conséquence ne sauraient nuire à l'état.*”

The Cistercians have generally been remarkable for the strict observance of their rules, especially that which enjoins silence. A story is told by Gaillardin, of a lay-brother belonging to the convent of Villiers in Flanders, who thwarted the designs of a nobleman that had laid a wager upon his success in

subordinate to a great abbey; but in these lesser abbeys or cells there was often a considerable difference; some were altogether subject to the great abbey, from whence the officers and monks were brought, and the revenues made a part of the common stock; to others a prior was sent from the abbey, and the convent paid a pension yearly as an acknowledgment of their subjection; but in other matters they acted as an independent body.—*Monasticon Hiber.*

causing the poor monk to break silence. He opened the conversation by asking his road, which was at once pointed out. Other questions were put, to which no response was given. The nobleman at this became enraged, threatened, vociferated, lifted his hand, and actually struck the religious, who manifested no uneasiness or anger thereat, but gently turned the other cheek to his tormentor. This was too much for the aggressor, who upon preparing to remount his horse, saw the monk cast down his spade and run to assist him. The young nobleman being overcome by compunction, asked forgiveness, and shed tears. And so great an impression did the conduct of the brother make on his mind, that he himself renounced the world and became a monk.*

Both the choir and lay religious make vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience;† and

* Gaillar. Hist. Ab. de la Trappe.

† These vows are not profitable, much less necessary, but pernicious to the christian church. From the vow of *continence* arose abominable filthinesses of all kinds in the monks' cloysters. From the vow of feigned *poverty* arose so many kinds of unprofitable drones, which devour the honey of the sedulous bees. From the vow of blinde and absolute *obedience*, flow such execrable infolencies against the lives of princes, and such horrible treasons as have

by virtue of a papal bull, have the privilege extended to them of making these vows perpetual. Hence, after a trying novitiate of a few years, the benighted and unsocial monk becomes bound to his cloister, where he strives, by the practice of rigid observances, either to obtain an increase of merit, or with disgust for life, to hasten the termination of that existence which an all-wise Creator had bestowed for better and wiser purposes, viz. the advancement of objects beneficial to the human family. Thus does the unhappy solitary partially frustrate and neutralise the designs of heavenly wisdom, and, in the words of the poet—

“Sets superstition high on virtue’s throne,
Then thinks his Maker’s temper like his own ;
Hence are his altars stained with reeking gore,
As if he could atone for crimes by more.
Thus, whilst offended Heaven he strives in vain
T’ appease by fasts, and voluntary pain,
Ev’n in repenting, he provokes again.”

Nor are the words which Minutius Felix addressed to the devotees of the heathen divinities, who used, in like manner, to cut and lash themselves in honour of their gods,

frequently been perpetrated by the Jesuits.—*Leigh’s Body of Divinity*. London, 1654. lib. viii. p. 743.

inapplicable to these monks :—" O, ye heathens !" said he, " what infatuation, what frenzy has seized upon you, that you thus dishonour yourselves on pretence of honouring your gods ? You supplicate your gods with the mouths of your wounds. It were better to have no religion at all, than be of such a religion. Certainly those who are guilty of such fanatical excesses must be lost to all reason and common sense !"

The Christian Brothers.

I SHALL now draw attention to the religious fraternity known as the Christian Brothers, or, Brothers of the Christian Schools,—an order originally planted in Paris towards the close of the xviith century by John Baptist de la Salle,—a man of no ordinary learning and ability, and remarkable for energy, perseverance, singularity, and devotion to one object. He was born at Rheims on the 30th of April, 1651, and was the first fruit of the union between Mademoiselle Moët de Brouillet and M. de la Salle, who held a high appointment in the Presidial Court of that place. His parents had designed him

for some exalted secular pursuit ; but at an early age having declared his intention to enter the priesthood, they most reluctantly consented, notwithstanding that such consent overturned all their darling projects. Upon completing his ecclesiastic studies in Paris, he was ordained priest by his archbishop M. le Tellier, on the Easter of the year 1671, and entered upon a canonry in the cathedral of Rheims.

His taste for monastic discipline soon manifested itself by the way in which he regulated his household. There were appointed hours for rising, study, and devotion. Silence was likewise enjoined, and the practice of spiritual reading during the refectory. Naturally enough these proceedings attracted public notice, and the young ecclesiastic was strongly censured for imposing such unnecessary restrictions upon his younger brothers. He was upbraided with being singular in his manners, morose and austere in his habits, and a "disgrace to the family," and the illustrious chapter of which he was a member. So far from such opprobrium causing him to relax the discipline he had adopted, it rendered him still more punctilious in his idiosyncratic observances.

De la Salle had a strong natural disposition to drowsiness, which in his case, almost amounted to a malady. His servant had instructions to awake him at four o'clock every morning, and not to retire until he had dressed. He then entered upon his devotions ; but sleepiness, which seemed to have been his demon, quickly returned. To remedy this, according to his biographer, Père Garreau, of the Society of Jesus, " he condemned himself to kneel during prayer on sharp-pointed stones, and thus succeeded in defeating the enemy, as the severe pain which they occasioned kept him continually attentive. This was only a prelude to the mortifications which he practised when Superior of the Christian Brothers ; and thus it was by this means that God unconsciously disposed him for the noble work of their institution."* About the year 1681, an accident occurred to our hero which would have proved fatal, had not Providence miraculously interposed to preserve the life of the saint. So says his biographer. The story goes, that one day when returning from the country, in consequence of the ground being

* Life of the Ven. J. B. De la Salle, D.D.

covered with snow, he happened to fall into an abyss remote from human succour. With the prospect of immediate death before his mind, he remained unmoved, and tranquilly besought aid from heaven. Immediately the snow, assuming a consistency, became hardened beneath his tread; and thus was he enabled to extricate himself from his perilous position. In order, however, that he should retain a grateful remembrance of this divine interposition, the Lord was pleased to afflict him with a rupture !*

M. de la Salle, after much labour, disappointment and vexatious opposition, succeeded in founding a monastic institute at Rheims, by collecting together a few disciples. In order more effectually to carry out his purposes he resigned his canonry; and for the edification and encouragement of the brothers made a total renunciation of his property in favour of the poor. He next drew up temporarily rules for the guidance of the community, adopted ecclesiastical costume, and fixed upon a name for the new order. Having, with two others, in the November of 1691, made vows of association

* Ibid.

and stability to the institution, even although they should be necessitated through poverty to ask alms or live on bread alone, he established a noviciate in Vaugirard, where he met with the co-operation of Count du Charmel. "What is read of the ancient solitaries concerning austerity and mortifications," observes Père Garreau, "can scarcely surpass the practices of the novices at Vaugirard. They inhabited a house without furniture or a window that could be closed. The rooms were open to the winds, to rain, sleet, and snow. They had no beds except badly made-up palliasses. Two counterpanes only were in the establishment; one of which was for the sick, and the other for M. de la Salle, but was never worn by him. The building was destitute of both fire and kitchen; consequently, food had to be prepared at Rue du Bac; and this consisted only of some remains afforded by the charitable community of St. Sulpice. The dress of the novices announced extreme poverty, and though they practised long prayers, fasts, and watching, yet were they content and happy."*

De la Salle made it a practice to fast for

* Life of the Ven. J. B. De la Salle, D.D.

days together, in order to overcome all kinds of repugnance to food. It is said that he knew not the nature of the edibles which used to be served at table. On one occasion, the cook by mistake placed before the brothers some prepared wormwood. After tasting it, they believed they were poisoned, and ceased eating; but the superior finished the meal. Upon manifesting to him their uneasiness, the food was examined and its nature discovered, which circumstance continued long to form matter for amusement.

Having founded an institute in Paris, M. de la Salle retired to the solitude of Vaugirard where, after fasting and macerating his body, he proceeded to frame a code of rules whereby the various communities he had organised should uniformly be governed. When these were completed he summoned the brethren together, and having placed his collection of decrees in their hands, authorised them to express thereupon their free opinion. The majority readily concurred in the views of their superior, while others murmured at the rigidity of the proposed restrictions. This want of unanimity among his disciples led M. de la Salle to enter upon a further retreat of eight days, during which time he made

such modifications as wisdom and prudence dictated. The following was the result :— The brothers were to observe strict silence at recreation, until they had first saluted the brother-director and obtained his permission. They were not to speak of any individual but in terms of praise. They were not to indulge in any frivolous talking, or what was merely calculated to indulge an idle curiosity. Silence was to be observed when they separated after recreation. Levity and jesting were to be avoided. Loud talk and laughter were prohibited. They were neither to contradict nor to correct each other, this being reserved to the brother-director. Finally, they were to discourse on such topics only as might lead to the love of God and to the practice of virtue. These rules were further extended and modified at a subsequent period.

The next step taken by the founder of this new order was, to have the brothers vow stability to the institute and obedience to himself. Meanwhile the schoolmasters of Paris viewed the progress of this institution with jealousy and as inimical to their interests, which undoubtedly was the case. Accordingly, they raised clamours against the monks ; and having taken legal

proceedings, obtained a provisional sentence, by virtue of which they took possession of whatever effects were found in the schools of St. Sulpice. The brothers were next cited before the authorities, and pending the decision of the court had to close their schools. This was no small trial to the energetic founder, who for three months had to view his cherished plans inoperative. After the case had been heard the judge decided, that the abstracted property should be restored to the schools, and that the brothers had authority to resume their functions ; a sentence which was received by the people with shouts of acclamation.

So great had the reputation of M. de la Salle and his community become, that neighbouring bishops, and even Louis XIV., patronised and advanced the interests of the new fraternity. Persons of all ranks and conditions flocked to the schools, which had now been established at Chartres, Calais, Troyes, St. Yon, Dijon, Rouen, Grenoble, St. Denis, and the principal towns of France. Even an establishment was founded in • Rome, A. D. 1702, under the joint protection of Clement XI. and the archbishop ; a consummation which De la Salle had long

and earnestly desired. These indefatigable labours and protracted austerities, however, brought on acute illness; and he expired at Rouen, on Good Friday, 1719, at the age of 68 years. In 1734, the brothers of St. Yon, having built a fine church, solicited Nicholas, archbishop of Rouen, to grant to them the remains of their founder; which request was unhesitatingly complied with. The account of the exhumation cannot better be given than in the biographer's own words:—"On the 16th July, about three o'clock, P. M., M. Bridel, vicar-general of Rouen, came to the church of St. Severus, accompanied by many clergymen and some members of parliament. The tomb of M. de la Salle was opened in his presence. The body was found entire; but his sacerdotal ornaments were decayed. Corruption had spared the tassel of his square cap, his shoes, and the little wooden cross, which had been placed between his hands. All these were taken away with a pious solicitude by the assistants, who wished to preserve them as relics. When the body had been exhumed, and a verbal process of the state in which it was found had been drawn up, the procession commenced its route. It was composed of more

than three hundred ecclesiastics, all in surplices, and holding lighted tapers. The body was borne by sixteen priests, in surplices and stoles, and four canons from the metropolis held the corners of the pall. To maintain good order among the immense crowds that assisted at this solemn ceremony, troops were placed in files, between which the clergy walked. When the procession approached the house of St. Yon, the brothers went out to meet it, carrying lighted tapers, and joining their prayers to the solemn psalms used on such occasions. Shortly after the entry of the body into the church, the president of the parliament, several magistrates and ladies of distinction, who had just arrived, expressed a desire to see the holy body. The coffin was opened to satisfy their pious curiosity. M. Bridel, who officiated, blessed the vault, and the precious remains were deposited therein on the same evening. Next day the archbishop consecrated the chapel, and celebrated in it the first mass."*

Between the years 1699, and the 19th of February 1790, when the National Assembly issued a decree suppressing all religious socie-

* Life of the Ven. J. B. De la Salle, by Père Garreau, S. J.

ties, this institute flourished remarkably, notwithstanding the legal impediments and severe opposition it had frequently to encounter, of which the factious spirit and base conduct of some members were not the least. After the Reign of Terror, during which the property of the brothers had been confiscated, and even some had fallen martyrs, along with three prelates, to democratic fury,* Napoleon re-established the order by a decree issued on the 10th March, 1808; though its progress was scarcely perceptible until the restoration of the Bourbon family to the throne of France, when it once more began to flourish. In 1724, Lewis XV. confirmed the society, by granting to it letters-patent; and through the instrumentality of Cardinal Rohan, who held the office of ambassador, the rules of the new sodality were approved by Benedict XIII. and the institute itself

* The convent of Discalced Carmelites, where these brothers met with their death, is situate in the Rue de Vaugirard. It has been redeemed by Madame de Soyecourt, a Carmelite nun, and now belongs to that community. Its church is remarkable for its elegance and beautiful dome. The spots of blood from the martyred priests are still seen on the walls and kissed with respect. An interior chapel at the foot of the garden preserves also similar traces. It is visited annually by numbers of the faithful.—*Note to Life of De la Salle by the Christian Brothers.*

elevated to the dignity of a religious order. Bulls to this effect were dispatched from Rome in January, 1725.

From the official returns of the French superior-general up to the 10th November, 1842, we find that there are in France three hundred and twenty-six convents of the order, containing 3,024 members, including novices. In Italy, there are thirteen houses, and 114 brothers. In Piedmont, eleven establishments, containing 135 inmates. In Belgium, seventeen monasteries and 185 monks. Besides which there are foundations in Switzerland, Greece, and even Canada—the entire amounting to three hundred and ninety religious houses, and 3,615 members.

An eminent writer observes, that “unless a tree has borne blossoms in spring, you will vainly look for fruit on it in autumn.”* Now, in proof that modern monasticism is just as prone to indulge in the supernatural as in its palmy days of ignorance and superstition, when even monks did not know the name of the rule by which they had bound themselves to follow,† it will only be neces-

* Gueffes at Truth.

† Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 286. (Soames.)

fary for me to insert the following mythical story, related as stubborn fact, from the pen of the Jesuitical biographer of M. de la Salle; though one can scarcely imagine how such fatuity of mind could be exhibited in this enlightened age of human progress. It is a legend of the 18th century!—

“The Chevalier d’Armstadt, a young lord of an illustrious house in Germany, quitting the service of the emperor, after the battle of Denain, came to France, and passing through Lyons, he delayed there for some days to see whatever might be curious in that city. Much conversation was then at Lyons about a demoniac who was to be exorcised. The chevalier, who was not a catholic and was but little disposed to believe what is called *possession*, had the curiosity to go see the exorcisms performed. He entered the church a sceptic pitying the credulity and simplicity of the spectators. When he approached the demoniac, writhing in frightful contortions, thus addressed him: ‘Thou believest not that there are demons, but one day thou shalt feel their fury.’ These words were to him like a thunderbolt. It was a grace which God granted him. He was faithful to it at the moment. He went out

in consternation, making the most mournful reflections upon his unbelief and the disorders of his life. He resolved to renounce his errors and enter into the bosom of the catholic church, whose doctrine he began to study; and some months after he made his abjuration to the archbishop of Lyons. Then, with the design of performing a suitable penance, he went to Paris in order to place himself under the direction of some zealous and enlightened confessor capable of aiding him to quit his irregularities. God led him to the community of St. Sulpice. One of the members, a virtuous priest, advised him to fortify himself still more in his good resolutions by retiring into the house of M. de la Salle. The fervent penitent followed this counsel and became a boarder among the brothers on the 8th of October, 1714.

“He almost instantly wished to perform the same exercises as the novices. It was then the demon kept the promise which he had made to him at Lyons. The chevalier had received many dangerous wounds, which he had cured by means prohibited by the law of God. From the moment of his entry among the brothers he felt great pains which increased daily. He lost his rest, and passed

the night in groans loud enough to be heard by those in the next apartments. The brothers thought these were the groans of a converted heart. One morning he was absent from the exercises. They went to his chamber, where they found him in bed, motionless, senseless, and weltering in his blood. Terrified at this sad spectacle, they hastened to afford him relief. The remedies prescribed took no effect. He remained some days motionless and speechless. They despaired of his life; and he received extreme unction.

“ This sacrament produced a wonderful effect. Immediately his gaping wounds closed. He recovered his speech and recollection, and next day he was able to resume the exercises of the novices. Shortly after he relapsed into the same state and gave signs of life only by frightful contortions, vomiting blood and rolling his eyes in a horrible manner. He was often observed to fix his eyes upon a particular part of the chamber, to move his lips rapidly, and to make motions with his arms like to those of a man who fights and wards off blows. He passed the whole night in these violent agitations. A vision of four hours succeeded,

in which he saw, under frightful forms, a crowd of demons, who threatened to kill him, if he did not immediately quit the house. This spectacle cost him extraordinary efforts, which reduced him to such debility that they thought he would expire at every moment. After this he beheld the Blessed Virgin, to whom he was very devout since his conversion. Her presence dispersed the infernal troop. She approached to console him, and in a short time he recovered.

“No sooner was he in the re-enjoyment of his health than he begged to be admitted to the habit of the brothers, and was consequently received. The demon at this became furious, and assailed him by new torments, seizing him by the neck and grasping him so tightly as if he would have strangled him, and thus deprived him of the power of respiration. His tongue became thick and incapable of motion; yet his recollection still remained, and he received the holy viaticum with marks of great devotion. The community thinking he was about to expire recited the prayers for a departing soul. As they proceeded the demon gradually relaxed his fury, and finally left him in health and peace.

“The evil spirit, exasperated at his having embraced a life so holy and so penitent, soon returned again to the charge. One day he so moved the springs of the chevalier’s imagination that he thought he beheld the priest who advised him to join the community, brother Bartholomew, and the master of novices, each armed with a heavy discipline, lacerating his back in a most pitiless manner. This was to inspire him with a horror for these three men who directed him in the affairs of his salvation. The idea remained some time engraven on his mind without being dissuaded from its reality ; when, at length, he knew the malice of the imposture he animated himself the more to sustain his attacks. Satan assaulted him anew. He tore the nails from his feet. He felt easily convinced of this fact by the testimony of his eyes. *This was seen by all the brothers!* From all these appearances M. de la Salle judged that the novice was possessed by a demon : but, as he knew a person may be deceived in such cases, he reserved his thoughts to himself. He shut himself up in the chamber of the novice and repeated over him the prayers of the church for demoniacs. These prayers were efficacious. The demon was

forced to quit the unfortunate young man, who no longer felt his attacks, but who very soon after proved faithless to his vocation.”*

The first attempt to establish a similar religious guild in this country was made in Ireland by Mr. Edmond Rice, of Waterford, during the year 1802, when a few brothers associated under the fostering care and spiritual guidance of Dr. Thomas Hussey, the Roman catholic prelate of that city. The constitutions of the Presentation order were originally adopted by the members of this new community, but these were subsequently relinquished for those of their foreign confrères.

So rapidly did this institution progress that in 1808, it possessed three foundations, although the number of postulants were necessarily limited. It was then thought desirable to make annual vows, as those of a longer duration are not permitted except in an order confirmed by the papal see. Accordingly Dr. Power, who had succeeded to the pre-lacy, drew up the required formulæ; and the monks, after an eight-days' retreat, pronounced them in the bishop's presence.

* Life of the Ven. J. B. De la Salle.

The institute shortly afterwards assumed a regular shape. There was less difficulty in obtaining subjects, and its further extension became manifest. Dr. Power wrote to the Propaganda, giving a detailed account of what had been done, and praying for its approval. In reply, Cardinal de Pietro suggested that the rules and constitutions of the society be laid before Pius VII., a proceeding, however, which was never taken.

After Dr. Murray had returned from Paris to Dublin in 1817, he submitted to the brothers there the rules of the French institute, together with the apostolic brief by which it was confirmed. A general chapter was convened in Waterford on 19th Aug. 1817, in order to consider the propriety of embracing the proposed constitutions. After much discussion and deliberation, it was finally agreed to accept as many of the articles specified in the brief as were considered feasible. The rules thus adopted were then transmitted to Rome for approval, accompanied by a memorial from the brothers, and letters from several bishops recommending the pontiff to grant the prayer thereof. On the 5th of Feb. 1820, a brief was issued by Pius VII. confirming not only these articles but

the institute itself; which document was conveyed to Ireland by Dr. Kenny, of the Society of Jesus, early the following year.

The brothers, nineteen in number, assembled at Thurles on the 25th of August following, when this papal brief was read and adopted, there being but three dissentient voices. Votes of thanks were also passed to those prelates under whose guardianship the institute had flourished. The senior brotherhood then adjourned to the convent at Waterford, and entered upon a retreat of eight days, which was conducted by the bishop. When the retreat had terminated, they proceeded to the domestic chapel. After sundry religious services the brief was publicly read. During the reading the monks remained on their knees. Then in presence of each other, and with lighted tapers in their hands, they severally pronounced irrevocable vows. The next step was to proceed to scrutiny in order to elect a superior-general; which office, by a majority of suffrages, was conferred upon the founder. At first the governing power was not invested in an individual beyond ten years, after which a fresh election took place. It was thought desirable, however, to make the general's authority cease only with his life;

which decree was also confirmed by a papal rescript, in 1833.* Upon the resignation of the late Mr. Edmond Rice, in July, 1838, owing to infirmity, Mr. M. P. Rierdon, a very estimable and accomplished man, was elevated to the rank of superior-general.

The annexed is the official returns of the condition of the order up to a recent period : —“ The Institute is composed of nineteen houses, having ninety school-brothers, fifteen serving brothers, fifty-eight schools, and about ten thousand children and adults under instruction. There are eleven of the houses situate in Ireland; namely, in Dublin (three); Waterford, Cork, Limerick, Dungarvan, Carrick-on-Suir, Thurles, Ennistymon, and Claren Bridge, County Galway: seven in England, London (two); Manchester (two) Liverpool, Preston, and Sunderland; and one in Sydney, to which three brothers were sent

* This clearly exhibits the spiritual jurisdiction which pontiffs assume over the liege subjects of kings and emperors. The very pope alluded to, in his bull, “ *Ad Perpetuam rei Memoriam*,” dated from the church of Santa Maria, the Major at Rome, the 10th of July, 1809, uses these emphatic words : —“ Let them once again understand that, *by the law of Christ, their sovereignty is subjected to our throne !!!*” — Sabine’s Hist. Christ. Church, chap. i. p. 553.

with the Most Rev. Dr. Polding, at the express request of the Sacred Congregation."

The Fathers of the Oratory.

AMONG the most remarkable of the religious associations which arose in defence of the church during the time of Luther, and have sprung up in this country in our own day, may be reckoned that of the Oratorians, or Fathers of the Oratory. This institute was first founded in Italy by Philip Neri, the singular incidents and extraordinary exploits of whose life are not without interest ; a few of which will doubtless prove entertaining to the curious reader.

Neri, or Neriùs, was born in Florence, A. D. 1515, during the pontificate of Leo X. His father followed the occupation of an attorney, and was a great friend of the monks, especially the Dominicans. His mother was the descendant of a noble family who held distinguished offices in the state during the time of the republic. Philip, who was the youngest of four children, manifested during boyhood a precocity of mind and quickness of perception unusual in persons of such

tender years. To these may be added considerable susceptibility and a docile and obedient disposition. So submissive was he, it is said, to his father, that he caused him only on one occasion some slight uneasiness. The cause was this : Happening one day to be singing psalms with a younger member of the family, his eldest sister Caterina teased and tormented him, upon which he gave her a slight push. This act so displeased his father that he chastised the delinquent, who repented even to tears of his misdeed. The strictness with which he followed his mother's injunctions was not only exemplary but scrupulous. If she directed him to remain in a certain place, nothing could induce him to quit it without her express permission. He was equally dutiful to his step-mother, who upon her death-bed declared that his very remembrance was to her a consolation. His comrades nicknamed him " The good Pippo," owing to the blandness of his manners and the blamelessness of his life. One of his biographers informs us that, " One day when he was about eight or nine years old, he saw an ass standing in the court-yard, and with a boy's thoughtlessness jumped upon its back. By some accident he and the beast both fell down

a flight of stairs into the cellar. He was crushed beneath the ass, and no part of his body was visible except an arm. A woman who witnessed the accident ran to him and drew him from under the animal, not as she supposed killed or maimed, but safe and sound, without the least vestige of his fall."* It is further related that, "Once returning from the Zecca to the Petti palace, near which he was born and dwelt, he lost a gold necklace, but no sooner had he prayed than he found it. At another time he recovered by the same means some things which had dropped from under his arm a great way off."†

Neri when a boy made considerable proficiency in rhetoric and other sciences under the tuition of Clementi, a man of some notoriety in his day. At the age of eighteen, when his grammar studies were completed, he was sent to reside with a wealthy uncle, named Romulo, who intended him for his heir. Not relishing however the sort of society into which he was thrown, and fearing the allurements of the world, he shortly quitted his uncle's roof and travelled to Rome a friend-

* F. Bacci's *Life of St. Philip Neri*. Trans. from the Italian by F. W. Faber, priest of the Oratory, vol. i.

† Ibid.

less pilgrim, apparently without object or plan. Here he entered the house of a Florentine nobleman, named Galeotto Caccia, who took a great interest in his juvenile but eccentric *protégé*. Shortly afterwards he commenced such a course of excessive abstinence and led so rigid a life, that not only in Rome but at Florence he attracted public attention. His chief food was a little bread and water daily, to which with difficulty he was induced to add a few olives and some herbs. To such a degree did he carry his poverty, that before he left his home he would accept of nothing from his father but a couple of shirts. His chamber, which was a small apartment, contained simply a meagre bed, a few books, and some linen suspended upon a cord against the wall. Frequently he spent whole nights in prayer; and every day he visited several churches, although they were miles apart and some of them without the city. According to another biographer, Galloni, the divine love so dilated his heart, that the gristle which connected the fourth and fifth ribs was broken, which accident gave freer scope for that organ to perform its functions.* In this state he

* *Acta Sanctorum, Maii*, tom. vi. cap. 1. (*Vita S. Philippi Nerii*.)

lived fifty years. So violently did his heart pulsate that whenever he pressed any of his disciples to his breast, a remedy which they were wont successfully to employ when labouring under temptation, their heads bounded off from his body as though they had received a severe galvanic shock. The internal sensation of heat which Philip constantly felt was so excessive, that although aged he had to have recourse even in rigid winters to light clothing, spare diet, and cooling medicines. Besides, he used to sleep with his windows open all night, and have attendants to fan him while in bed. Shortly after Gregory XIII. made a law commanding all priests to wear surplices in the confessional, Philip happened one day to visit the pope with his cassock and other robes unfastened. Upon Gregory requiring an explanation, Philip remarked: "Why, I really cannot bear my waistcoat buttoned, and yet your holiness will have it that I shall wear a surplice besides." "No, no," replied the pope, "the order was not for you; do as you please." *

Neri, with fourteen or fifteen poor unlettered companions, organised the foundation

* Bacci's *Life of St. Philip Neri*, trans. by F. W. Faber, vol. i.

of a religious fraternity of the Pilgrims and the Convalescents, still famous in Rome, in the church of our Saviour Del-Campo, A.D. 1548. In 1551, he was ordained priest, being then thirty-six years of age; at which period he increased the number and severity of his austerities. It is affirmed, that while saying mass and during his devotions his body used occasionally to be elevated several yards high, and that a resplendent cloud would cover him all over and transform the crimson of his vestments into a radiant whiteness, his face meanwhile emitting a fiery brilliancy.* He is also said to have been

* We find the same authentically attested of many other servants of God. St. Ignatius of Loyola was sometimes seen raised in prayer several feet above the ground; his body at the same time shining with light. The like elevations are related in the lives of St. Dominic, St. Dunstan, St. Philip Beniti, St. Cajetan, St. Albert of Sicily, B. Bernard Ptolemæi, Instituter of the Congregation of our Lady of Mount Olivet, etc. etc. Many of the authors of these lives, persons of undoubted veracity, testify that they were themselves eye-witnesses of this fact; others were so careful and diligent writers that their accounts cannot be doubted." Thus Trivet tells us that St. Richard, then chancellor to St. Edmund, archbishop of Canterbury, one day opening softly the door saw his archbishop raised high in the air with his knees bent and his arms stretched out; but falling gently to the ground and seeing his chancellor he complained to him that he had hindered him of great spiritual delights and comfort. (Trivet. Annal. p. 73. ad. am.

gifted with the spirit of prophecy and miraculous discernment, so that he could penetrate the vista of futurity, and disclose the pent-up secrets of hearts. Several parties whom he named were afterwards elevated to the rank of cardinals and popes as he had predicted. Others were restored from sickness to health, etc. And with respect to the sins of private individuals, he particularly detected those against chastity by the stench which the perpetrators thereof exhaled.*

Although the Congregation of the Oratory was begun in 1551, when Philip collected together some half-dozen disciples from the higher ranks, yet this society was not regularly established until the year 1564. The name of the fraternity took its rise from the chapel or oratory at San Girolamo, where the fathers used to preach, pray, hear con-

1240.) Dom. Calmet, an author still living, and a severe and learned critic, assures us that he knows a religious man who in devout prayer is sometimes involuntarily raised in the air and remains hanging in it without any support. (Calmet, *Diff. sur les Apparitions*, ch. 21.) See in the *Life of St. Theresa*, written by herself, how notwithstanding her resistance, her body sometimes was raised from the ground. — *Note in Life of St. Philip Neri*, by Alban Butler.

* *Acta Sanctorum Maii*, tom. vi. cap. xxvii. (*Vita II. S. Philippi Neri*.) F. Bacci's *Life*, trans. by Father Faber, vol. i.

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feffions, and perform other religious duties. According to Baronius,* who entered the Congregation at eighteen years of age, and fucceeded Philip as provincial, the fpiritual exercifes were as follows : When the community had afsembled in the chapel, a fhort time was firft fpent in mental prayer. Then Neri delivered a difcourfe ; after which fome portion of a pious book was read, upon which paffing comments were made. When the reading terminated, three of the fathers fucceffively afcended the roffrum, and each gave an addrefs which occupied half-an-hour in delivery, either upon church hiftory, exegetical theology, or elfe fome moral thefis, when the afsembly broke up for the day.†

The fociety which Philip Neri eftablifhed properly fpeaking was not a religious order, but fimplly a body of *fecular* priefts, who although living, not neceffarily however, in community, were unbound by vows or oaths like the members of *regular* houfes. The fathers, however, ufed one common purfe and table. Pope Gregory XIII. gave this order his approbation, A.D. 1577,‡

* Created Cardinal in 1596, by Clement VIII.

† Annales Eccles. tom. i. p. 555.

‡ Mosheim's Eccles. Hift. vol. iii. p. 278. (Soames.)

together with the newly built church of our Lady of Vallicella, of which possession was taken in 1553. Philip lived to see numerous houses of his order established throughout Italy, and especially in the Tuscan states. The Italian founder was cardinal Peter de Berulle.

Philip used to relate the annexed event concerning F. Zenobio de' Medici, and F. Servanzio Mini, priests of the oratory :—
“ These two fathers had agreed together to hear each others' confessions every night before they went to matins, in order that they might say office with greater devotion. But the devil was envious of so much good ; and one night, about two hours before the usual time, he knocked at the cell of Fra. Zenobio, saying, ‘ Up quickly, it is time.’ At these words the good father woke, got up, and went as usual into the church, where he found the devil in the form of Fra. Servanzio, walking near the confessional. Believing it was really his companion, he knelt down to confess, and the devil sat down as if to hear the confession, and at each fault which Fra. Zenobio named, he cried out, ‘ It is nothing, it is nothing.’ At last the friar adding a fault which seemed to him of a somewhat more grave character, the devil

still said, 'It is nothing.' When Fra. Zehobio heard this form of speech he bethought himself a little; and suspecting, not without reason, some diabolical illusion, he at once made the sign of the cross, saying, 'Perhaps you are a devil from hell;' at which words the evil spirit was confounded, and immediately disappeared."*

It is recorded that at one time when St. Philip lay dangerously ill with a tertian fever, and his life was despaired of by his physicians, he was suddenly restored to health by an apparition of the Virgin Mary. While his medical attendants and others were in the sick man's chamber momentarily expecting his death, they were suddenly startled by hearing him vehemently exclaim: "*O Sanctissima Domina mea! O pulcherrima, et decora! O Domina mea benedicta!*" "Ah my Madonna, my beautiful Madonna, my blessed Madonna!" etc. Immediately the physician hastened to his couch, drew aside the curtains, and found their patient in an ecstasy, with his hands lifted up towards heaven, his body elevated a foot above the bed, and apparently in the act of tenderly embracing some one, at the

* Bacci's *Life of St. Philip Neri*, trans. by F. W. Faber, vol. i.

same time saying: "*Non sum dignus, non sum dignus, Ecquis ego sum, Domina mea dulcissima, ut venias ad me?*" "Who am I, my dear Madonna, that you should visit me and take away my pain?" The spectators at this were astonished, as well they might, while some of them could not refrain from shedding tears. Having come to himself, Philip explained to the physicians what had occurred to him, and then dismissed them, observing, "I have no further need of your services, for the Madonna has come and healed me." They then felt his pulse, and were amazed to find that the fever had entirely left him. Next morning he arose perfectly cured. This is said to have been attested upon oath by Galloni and the four physicians who were present.*

Early the following year (A.D. 1595) he was again attacked with fever, accompanied by hæmorrhage of the lungs. After some weeks of violent suffering, having received extreme unction from Baronius, and the viaticum from Cardinal Borromeo, he expired on the 26th May, as he had three years before predicted, being fourscore and two years old.

* Galloni and Baccius, l. 4, c. ii. *Acta Sanctorum*, Maii, tom. vi, chap. xxxiii. (*Vita S. Philippi Neri*.)

The very hour at which Philip died he is said to have appeared to several nuns, and his biographers have taken the trouble to narrate even the conversations which took place on this occasion. With one religious however, named Sister Vittoria de' Maffimi of the convent of St. Marta, who had been a penitent of his, he had rather a prolonged interview: "I have come," said he, "to see you before I depart; and you must not lament at losing me." The nun replied: "O my father, are you then going to heaven?" Then Philip showed her a field full of thorns, saying, "If you desire to come where I am going, you will have to pass through this." At this the virgin began to weep and said: "My father, I shall never see you more!"* A great concourse of people, among whom were several cardinals, monks, and people of distinction, came to see his body when exposed to view in the church, where several miracles are said to have been wrought.

There is one circumstance, however, worth recording. The evening following the exposition in the church, when the physicians and surgeons were called in to a *post mortem* exami-

* *Acta Sanctorum*, Maii, tom. vi. cap. xxxiv. (Vita S. Philippi Nerii.)

nation in prefence of many fathers of the Congregation, in turning the body the deceased man with his own hands sheltered and protected those parts which modesty usually conceals, in the same way as a living person would, and the like occurred when the fathers were washing the body. Although the weather was sultry no foetid smell, as is usual in such cases, was perceptible; and some of the bystanders declared that it emitted a sweet and agreeable odour. Upon opening the body the surgeons found that the swelling under his left breast was owing to his ribs being broken, and the skin projected to the bigness of a man's fist. The præcordia was healthy, the heart unusually dilated, the great artery being twice its natural size. No water was discovered in the pericardium, and the ventricles of the heart contained no blood. From these *post mortem* appearances the medical attendants inferred that the ardour of Philip's contemplation must have been excessive. His heart and bowels were buried among the brethren of his order, while the body was placed in a coffin of cypress-wood and interred in a little chapel, the cardinal of Florence not deeming it expedient that he should be laid in a common burial-ground. Seven years afterwards, A.D. 1602, one

Nerus de Nigris, a Florentine noble, built a magnificent chapel, and beautified with costly ornaments the church of the Oratory, to which the body of Philip was translated with great pomp and ceremony. At the exhumation of the body it was found perfectly entire and incorrupt; when additional miracles were wrought at his tomb.* He was canonized by Gregory XV. A. D. 1622.

An institute of St. Philip was established in London some few years ago by Fathers Newman, Faber, and one or two other Oxford clergymen, who had embraced the Roman form of christianity. At the time the Oratorians occasioned a good deal of comment, and even merriment; for it was rather a novel sight in England, but especially in the metropolis, to observe the fathers and brothers in their long, monkish *soutanes* and broad-brimmed hats and “boy-like turn-down collars,” parading the principal streets; looking like the ghosts of past ages in the sun-light of our civilization! Several Congregations of the order have now been formed, of which the principal are in London and Birmingham.

* *Acta Sanctorum, Maii*, tom. vi. cap. xxxv. (Vita S. Philippi Nerii.)

St. Philip is regarded as the representative saint of modern times; and even Father Faber does not hesitate to assert that the antiquated idea of monasticism has grown obsolete, needing a more vigorous, humane, and social development. "If you read St. Bernard," he observes, "you will see that he seems to consider even salvation difficult, but perfection a dream out of the cloister. This is the common language of the spiritual writers of the middle ages: the cloister means perfection; the world is not to be leavened, or attempted to be leavened; it is to be given up as an impracticable, hopeless business. If you love God, you must take to yourself the wings of a vacation, and fly away into the wilderness or the monastery. The church and the world were almost sphered visibly apart in those times. *Look how different St. Philip is!* Perfection for all classes, in all states of life, under every possible variety of circumstances. This was the great lesson he was commissioned to teach. Stay at home, keep as you are, mind your spinning, marry and settle,—these were household phrases with him; for all he loved the religious orders so much. Look at the heights of perfection to which he led people, and

yet how mild, it might be called *lax*, was the moral and ascetical theology he taught ! All has the indelible impress of the modern genius upon it. Look at his free manners ! He used to make his meditation sitting on a bench, and rocking to and fro, or lying on his bed ; he used to hear confessions in bed ; he set boys to play at ‘ fives ’ in the court-yard when they were wanting to go to confession ; and all this was in sober earnest, and meant something. Is this like a picture of a mediæval faint ? ” * We must certainly answer *no*. And here I cannot but admire the genius and jesuitry of that church which can thus become “ all things to all men,” and suit itself so admirably to the tastes, temperaments, characters ; nay, even prejudices and follies of all peoples and all times. The Oratorians, therefore, may be regarded as the Jesuits of England, who have come among our protestant population with the express view of proselytising. Nor do they deny the purpose of their mission. Like the Jesuits they practise most of their subtle artifices ; but unlike them, they will not condescend to duplicity

* Spirit and Genius of St. Philip Neri. By F. W. Faber, Priest of the Oratory.

or secrecy. They tell us plainly that they have a work to do in this country among our toiling myriads and our poor neglected factory children. They have come, they tell us, "to play at double or quits with the devil;"* that protestantism is "nascent," is, in fact, "behind its time," that "St. Philip's outward dress, no less than his hidden spirit, fits England to a nicety;" and that "if the land had been measured for him and for his Oratory the fit could not have been completer."† They inform us, moreover, that England's grand need at the present day is not an effective administration, or a national system of education, a cricket-club, or a Victoria park, but—St. Philip and a society of Oratorians!

But do these "missioners" expect success? That they do. Hear Mr. Faber:—"If St. Philip can catch but *seven thousand* men up and down the metropolis and the manufacturing towns, we shall have in England as great a number of the right kind of men as there were children of Israel, the strength and leaven of the land, who in the bad times

* Essay on Catholic Home Missions, by Father Faber.

† Spirit and Genius of St. Philip Neri, by Father Faber.

of Ahab had not bowed their knees before Baal. He can have but little confidence in St. Philip, who can despair of his doing *at least this!*"* Again he informs us that the shepherdless youth of our overgrown towns is Philip's flock; that that flock will hear and know his voice, though having never heard or known it before, and gather together in peace and joy and gay liberty round the dear old saint. "One such troop," he remarks, "of factory youths in a dozen large towns, and St. Philip's work will be worth England's having."† It is clear, therefore, that the Fathers of the Oratory are very sanguine of their mission, and that they regard it as no idle dream or Quixotic labour. The same writer tells us that "there is a remarkable affinity between the Oratory and the Franciscan order!" but I am inclined to the opinion that it approximates closer to the spirit and worldly craftiness of the Jesuit—that in fact its members are Jesuits under a *nom déguisé*. Indeed, it is not denied that the exchange of good offices and even instinctive sympathy is reciprocal between the Company and the Oratory. Where the Jesuits have been ex-

* Spirit and Genius of St. Philip Neri.

† Ibid.

pelled, the Oratorians occupied the vacant ground. It was and is so in Spain, and I believe in Mexico; while in Florence the fathers are nicknamed the “consuls of the Jesuits,” which order has long since been driven from that state.

As I have had but little opportunity of becoming personally acquainted with the *Exercises* of the Oratory, and as Father Faber states that “the best description of those used in England is that given by Blanco White in his Autobiography,”* I cannot do better than transcribe the account furnished by so excellent, forcible, and unsectarian a writer:—

“The system of these *Spiritual Exercises* is a masterpiece of church machinery As the persons arrived in the evening when the Exercises were to begin, they humbly kissed Father Vega’s hand, and after the exchange of a few words, each was sent to the room which he was to inhabit. These rooms were generally double-bedded. Into them the whole company were distributed, usually in couples. But, according to the rules of the house, all conversation was forbidden between the inhabitants of the same room,

* Note in Essay on Catholic Home Missions.

technically called *companions*. Soon after this domestic arrangement was over, a large bell announced the first meeting in the chapel. That place was kept nearly dark. A lantern, closed on all sides but one, threw its light on a statue of Christ expiring on the cross. As the object of the sculptor was to strike the senses, without any regard to taste, the statue was as large as life, with glass eyes, and the body so coloured as to represent flesh sprinkled here and there with blood. After the congregation had taken their seats in profound silence, one of the assistant priests read the subject of *meditation*. This reading lasted half an hour. At the end of it all knelt. For about a quarter of an hour nothing was heard but the pendulum of the clock which was to measure a full hour for meditation. Aware, however, that most of his spiritual patients would lose themselves in reverie if left entirely to their own thoughts, Father Vega assisted them with what in the language of asceticism are called *ejaculations*. It seemed as if his thoughts, growing too big and vehement to be contained in his breast broke out in spite of himself. At first these were short, and came at long intervals; but they gradually grew more frequent and longer; till, near the end of

the hour, and just before the congregation were allowed to rise from their knees, the monotonous chant of the ejaculations was changed into agonizing screams, accompanied with a loud smiting of the breast, in which the congregation joined, as they were moved; most of them repeating the words of the director, and loudly calling for mercy.

“ But the effects of Father Vega’s art were not seen in full force at the first meeting. He knew the human mind too well to attempt the application of a sudden impulse which might produce recoiling. As the same congregation were to remain under the operation of his spells till the tenth day after their entrance, he could operate at leisure. During that time the *exercitants* were not allowed to go out of the house, nor to see their nearest relations except for a few minutes, once or twice the whole time. The hour of rising was five o’clock in the morning. The employment of the day consisted of three hours of meditation at different times : one hour of reading the life of a saint, to which all attended in chapel : and lastly, just before supper and retiring to sleep, an extempore sermon by Father Vega, which lasted about an hour and a half.

“ Nor was this strict and uninterrupted discipline the only means employed to agitate and subdue the mind. There was a graduated scale of spiritual terrors, which, when raised to a certain pitch, made way to a gleam of affecting joy. The third day of the exercises was known to be the most terrific. The subject appointed for that day was the eternity of punishment. I cannot give an idea of the ingenuity employed in striking the imagination by means of this awful subject. Whatever can be conceived to torture the body and agonize the soul, all was described in the most vivid colours. In the morning, the reading and meditation turned upon the consignment of a wicked soul to hell. The howling of the evil spirits, as they celebrated their triumph; the first plunging of the wretched being into the flames; its cries of despair; its blasphemies against heaven; the applause with which the most horrible expressions were received by the devil and his angels—all were given with shocking minuteness. The ejaculations of the director added touches of lurid light to the picture; and yet he would not conclude by imploring mercy. That word could not pass his lips. His voice gradually sunk, while sighs and sobs grew louder and louder around him. Perceiving

the moment when terror was at its highest he suddenly assumed a composed and almost familiar tone, assuring his hearers that under the present impressions of his mind, oppressed and sinking as it was under the idea of sin and its appropriate punishment, it was impossible for him to speak of hope, of mercy, of forgiveness. He must, therefore, dismiss his hearers abruptly, and leave them to their own thoughts. He then clapped his hands, the usual signal for departure, and retired into the vestry. As the congregation crossed the small quadrangle before the chapel, on their way to their rooms, you might think you saw forty or fifty prisoners who had received sentence of death the moment before. Some held their hands before their eyes, and scarcely could keep themselves from crying aloud. Others looked down on the ground in the attitude of utter despair. All seemed absorbed in grief.

“The scene was however, very different in the evening. The reading, preparatory to meditation, was of hope and mercy. The ejaculations opened in a tone of voice which soothed the heart, so lately harrowed with terror. A fresh flood of tears was now seen to flow from the eyes of the congregation; but they were tears of gratitude, of tender-

ness, of love. A mere reaction of feeling might easily account for this change, but this reaction was not left to chance. The very aspect of the chapel secured it. It was not a gloomy vault as before. There were wax candles upon the altar, amongst which a smiling picture of the Virgin Mary seemed to greet the distressed penitents as they came in. The Virgin was indeed the principal, the all-engrossing object of that evening. The director's addresses to her as the hour of meditation was waning, were those of an enthusiastic lover, wooing his sovereign princess. In the midst of these raptures, the sound of music was heard from a gallery at the furthest end of the chapel. Several voices, accompanied by instruments of different kinds, sang the praises of the Virgin, the 'Refuge of Sinners,' at the same time Father Vega rose from his kneeling posture and taking up the picture presented it for a holy kiss to every one present. The music was generally drowned in the convulsive cries of the congregation. This was the appointed time to begin the general confessions."* After similar exercises,

* Life of the Rev. J. Blanco White, written by himself.
Edit. by J. H. Thom. vol. i. pp. 38—42.

and when the appointed time had transpired, the congregation received the communion and set out for their respective homes.

The Society of Jesus.

THOUGH last not least, I proceed to notice that arrogant, crafty, imperious, dangerous association characterised, though most inappropriately, as the Society of Jesus, in portraying whose history many gifted pens have been employed ; of whom the nations of the world have unfortunately known so much and yet understood so little ; which caused the formidable Philip II. to say, “Of all the religious orders that of the Jesuits is the only one which I cannot in the least comprehend !” It is really marvellous to conceive how any religious association of men could have attained to such influence, distinction, and authority, as virtually to guide the destinies of empires and wield the sceptre of the world. This the Company did until the order became alike the terror of civilized and semi-barbarous nations :—

“Black it stood as night—
Fierce as ten furies—terrible as hell !”

"There is not," remarks the historian,* "in the annals of mankind any example of such a perfect despotism exercised not over monks shut up in the cells of a convent, but over men dispersed among all the nations of the earth."

And here it will be necessary, in conformity with the plan already adopted, to give a brief sketch of the founder of this celebrated and extraordinary society.

Ignatius Loyola, the youngest scion of a noble house, was born at the castle of Loyola, in the district of Guipuscoa, in Biscay, Spain, A.D. 1491. Although bred up in luxury, ignorance† and vice at the palace of Ferdinand V., whose page he was, our young knight manifested an inclination for a life of action and valour not to be gratified in royal courts. Fired with the spirit of chivalry, panting after fame, and excited by brilliant pictures of legendary romance, he embraced the profession of a soldier,‡ after the example of his elder brothers, and dreamed delightedly of "war's alarms," hazardous adventures, valorous feats—

* Robertson.

† Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. vol. iii. p. 266. (Soames.)

‡ Acta Sanctorum, Julii, tom. vii. § 111. (Vita S. Ignatio Loyola, Conf.)

“ Races and games

Or tilting furniture, emblazoned shields,
Impresses quaint, caparisons and steeds,
Bases and tinsel trappings, gorgeous knights,
At joust and tournament.”

But the age of chivalry was gone when Boabdil surrendered Albayzin and Alhambra, and yielded up the keys of Granada to the Spanish sovereigns. Consequently Ignatius was born in an epoch not only unfortunate for himself but for the world.

In the year 1521, when Francis I. sent a powerful army into Spain, and the invading forces besieged Pampeluna, the capital of Navarre, Loyola, who had been left there by the viceroy not to command but to encourage the garrison, urged the besieged not to capitulate. They did so, however, and opened the gates to the enemy. In order to maintain his own honour Loyola retired, with a solitary soldier who had the heart to follow him, into the citadel. Here the garrison likewise deliberated upon surrendering, but he earnestly beseeched them to stand their ground. Meanwhile the French soldiers attacked the place with great fury, when a breach was opened, to which Loyola quickly rushed, sword in hand, along with the bravest

of his little band, to drive back the besiegers. A shot from a cannon, however, caused him to fall dangerously wounded, his left leg being bruised by a splinter of stone, and his right leg broken and shivered by the ball itself. Upon seeing their leader struck down, the garrison surrendered at discretion.*

Ignatius met with considerable attention and kind treatment at the hands of the victors, who had him conveyed to the general's quarters, and subsequently removed him, in a litter carried by two men, to the castle of Loyola, not far distant. Here his surgical attendants informed him that, owing to the bones having been badly set in the first instance, combined with the ill effects of the jolting he had sustained during the journey, it was necessary that the leg should be broken anew—an operation to which he submitted without a groan or even a murmur. A violent fever ensued, which had very nearly proved fatal. Indeed his life was despaired of; and it was by the merest chance that he recovered. His restoration to health is thus accounted for. One night when his death was momentarily

* *Acta Sanctorum*, Julii, tom. vii. § iii. (Vita S. Ignatio Loyola, Conf.) Bonhour's *La Vie de S. Ignace*.

expected he had a dream, in which St. Peter, to whom he was particularly devoted and once composed a poem in his praise, appeared to him and cured him with his own hand. Upon waking he found himself out of danger, his pain left him and his strength returned; "which event," says his French biographer, "shows that this dream was no illusion."* The miracle at all events wrought no salutary change in his heart or disposition, for he was still as worldly, vain, and cholerick as ever. The re-setting of his leg happened to leave an unsightly deformity behind, as the end of a bone projected from under his knee. This protuberance he compelled the surgeons to saw away; and during the dreadful operation he would neither suffer himself to be bound or held, and scarce evinced the slightest discomposure under the painful ordeal. His only object in having recourse to such an alternative was simply the gratification of his excessive vanity, and in order that the elegance of his boot and stocking might not be marred.† The limb being contracted

* Bonhour's *La Vie de S. Ignace*.

† Bonhour's *Ibid.* Butler's *Lives of the Saints*, vol. vii. (St. Ignatius.)

he had it stretched by a machine of iron, and for several days he would remain upon a kind of rack in excessive agony, violently endeavouring to lengthen it. But all those torturous efforts proved unavailing, and he remained a cripple for life.

Pending the cure of his knee he was confined to bed; and in order to relieve his turpid and troubled fancy he asked for a book of romances, as his literary tastes predisposed him to admire works of knight-errantry. The castle of Loyola not being able to furnish what he desired, the lives of the saints and a life of Christ was brought him instead. He perused these books at first merely as a pastime; but afterwards he betook him seriously to their study. Having considered the example of the ancient hermits who forsook human habitations and buried themselves alive in dens and caves, where they led abstemious and rigorous lives, he said within himself, "These men were of the same frame as I; why then should not I do what they have done?" He almost immediately thought of making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and becoming a hermit, but his excessive worldliness, and an *amour* which he had formed for a rich Castilian lady, made him

vacillate in his resolution until he had again taken up the extraordinary book which finally worked his conversion, and caused all vicissitude and fluctuation of mind to depart. He even then began to practise some of the austerities of those heroes whose histories he studied—treated his body with excessive rigour—practised midnight vigils—and wept tears of compunction for hours in succession.* This was the turning point in his life—an eventful one as everybody knows; one, moreover, which has peculiarly verified the saying of Voltaire: “Would you gain a great name be completely mad: but of a madness befitting the age. Have in your folly a bottom of reason to guide your ravings, and be excessively stubborn. It may chance that you get hanged; but if you are not you may have an altar!”†

He now began to see visions and hear noises. His already heated imagination became additionally inflamed upon the perusal of the biographies of such fanatics as Anthony and Paul. Devils tormented him and shook the apartment which he inhabited, until the

* Butler's *Lives of the Saints*. (St. Ignatius.) Vol. vii.

† *Dict. Philosoph.* tom. x. Ignace.

windows were broken and a rent was made in the wall, which remains to this day, says the latest writer of his life.* Another time the Virgin appeared to him environed with light, holding the infant Jesus in her arms ; which vision filled his soul with infinite pleasure and rendered earthly objects insipid to him ever after.

Fired with the chivalric idea of becoming a saint outright Ignatius quitted the castle of Loyola, on pretence that he was about to visit the duke of Najara, who during his convalescence had frequently come to see him ; sent back his servants upon arriving at a certain road, and betook himself to the Benedictine monastery of Montserrat, a place then very famous. Before presenting himself to the abbot, he purchased in the town a long coarse garment, a girdle, sandals, a wallet, and a staff, intending a pilgrimage to Jerusalem as soon as he had finished his devotions in the chapel of the Benedictines. Having attired himself in these strange habiliments, he gave his rich clothing to a beggar, who afterwards was imprisoned on suspicion of having stolen the same. Ignatius then

* Butler's Lives of the Saints, vol. vii. (St. Ignatius.)

proceeded to the monastery and had an interview with the abbot Chanones, to whom he unbosomed his heart and narrated the plan of austerities which he proposed to practise. The venerable monk encouraged the young saint, and after a sojourn of three days in the cloister, during which time he made a general confession of his sins to the abbot, he vowed perpetual chastity, dedicated himself to heaven and the Virgin, gave his horse to the monastery, and, like a true knight, hung his sword on a pillar by the altar, in testimony of his unalterable devotion to the cause he had embraced.*

He next journeyed bare-headed and with one foot bare, the other being yet tender, to the hospital of Manresa, some three leagues distant from Montserrat. He entered here unknown, being in the disguise of a poor pilgrim. His only food now was bread and water, which he begged. On Sundays he extended his repast by adding a few herbs which he first sprinkled with ashes. He lay on the ground, slept little, wore an iron girdle and a hair shirt, and every day spent

* *Acta Sanctorum, Julii, tom. vii. § 4.* (*Vita S. Ignatio Loyola.*) *Bonhour's La Vie de S. Ignace.*

seven hours on his knees. In addition to these mortifications he affected to be a clown, went begging about the streets, his face smeared with filth, his hair dishevelled, and his beard and nails grown out to a frightful length, the very model of the fated Nebuchadnezzar ! Children used to throw stones at him,—and no wonder !—and shout after him scornfully as he passed along. Yet so far from being any way annoyed at these contumelies, he rather courted and rejoiced in them. Afterwards he secreted himself in a dark deep ravine covered with thorns, half a mile from the town, called the Vale of Paradise, where by sheer accident he was discovered almost dead, and taken back to the hospital.

The workings of his morbid imagination had induced acute hypochondriases, which disciplines and long fastings tended rather to aggravate than diminish ; although as Coleridge says, “ A man who is full of inward heaviness, the more he is encompassed about with mirth, it exasperates and enrages his grief the more ; like ineffectual weak physic, which removes not the humour, but stirs it and makes it more unquiet.”* Ignatius,

* Aids to Reflection, Aphorism x. (Moral and Religious.)

however, found no nepenthe, no cordial able to act upon his agitated fancy, which already rendered him miserable through religious scrupulosity, and was fast hurrying him to the brink of despair. The Dominican monks, who compassionated his condition, received him out of charity into their convent at Manresa, where his mental disorders reached a crisis. Finally, he became the subject of heavenly raptures, when his malady departed; and the secrets of the divine mysteries, especially that of the Trinity, were fully revealed to him. But the supernatural knowledge which he acquired during his long ravishments was only made known to the pious abbot of Montserrat and the Dominican of Manresa.* This remarkable wisdom certainly presents a striking contrast to the gross ignorance of moral duties which he displayed when he set out on his journey to the shrine of the Benedictine monastery; and when having met with a poor Moreasco, or Mahometan, who spoke contemptuously of the Virgin, deliberated within himself whether, being a soldier, he was not justified

* *Acta Sanctorum, Julii, tom. vii. § v. (De S. Ignatio Loyola, Conf.)*

in taking the blasphemer's life. The solution of this moral problem he left to fate to decide by dropping his horse's bridle, being determined, should the horse turn round, to perpetrate the dread deed. The animal, happening to be more merciful than its master, pursued the onward road, and thus saved the life of a human creature !

Loyola next set about composing his *Spiritual Exercises*, which he subsequently published in Rome in 1548. This extraordinary composition produced severe criticisms in some quarters, and positive fault was found with it. To remedy this, Francis Borgia prevailed on pope Paul III. to give the work his approbation, which was accordingly done in a brief issued during the same year.

The authorship of the *Exercises* has given rise to much controversy. Cajetan, the Benedictine, affirms this book to have been written by Garcias Cisneros, the abbot of Montserrat ; a circumstance not at all improbable, considering the intimacy and confidence which existed between the monk and his young disciple. Even Alban Butler admits, that Ignatius " had no tincture of learning." How, then, could he possibly have composed so elaborate a work ? How-

ever, his biographers labour strenuously to refute all such charges, and claim for Loyola the honour of the production.*

After the plague which visited Italy had abated, Ignatius set out from Manresa on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Having met with a ship at Venice, to which port he had travelled on foot, bound for Cyprus, he embarked. During the voyage he so enraged the sailors by his ill-timed reproofs, that they conspired to set him ashore upon a desert island; but a sudden gust of wind fortunately prevented the ship from touching upon it, thereby frustrating their machinations. After landing at Cyprus he set sail for Joppa, August 1523, in company with several others bent on a similar mission. From thence he journeyed to Jerusalem, and arrived there in four days. He was then seized with the idea of converting the Mahometans, but the provincial of the Franciscans, by virtue of his authority held from the pope, ordered him to quit Palestine without delay. Ignatius obeyed the harsh mandate; but stole privately back

* *Vide Acta Sanctorum, Julii, tom. vii. § vi. (De S. Ignatio Loyola, Conf.) Bonhour's La Vie de S. Ignace.*

to Mount Olivet, in order to satisfy his devotion by kissing the foot-prints of the Saviour's feet !

At the beginning of the year 1524, he returned to Venice, and from thence journeyed on foot to Barcelona. Here he thought of becoming an ecclesiastic, and in order to qualify himself for the sacred office, entered upon "the pursuit of knowledge under difficulties." In fine, he began the study of grammar at the age of three-and-thirty, under the tuition of one Jerome Ardebal, in the mean time subsisting by the charities of a benevolent lady named Isabel Rosella. In this new and, to him, particularly dry study, he made little or, more truly, no progress. So full was his mind of the divine that he could not be brought to learn any secular science. For example, when conjugating the verb *Amo*, *I love*, he could only repeat, "I love God," or, "I am loved by God !" Likewise at the university of Alcala, where he attended lectures upon logic and divinity, his "confusion became worse confounded ;" for the multiplicity of scientific terms which he heard so turned his brain into a sort of chaos, that he verily learned nothing at all, although he studied laboriously day and night. His ex-

cessive stupidity became so notorious that the little boys, his school-fellows, used to laugh and jeer at him for his ignorance, but their taunts he received with joy. Butler relates, that once "hearing that a poor man called Lafano had hanged himself on a beam in his chamber, he ran to him, cut the rope, and prayed by him till the man returned to himself, though he had before seemed perfectly dead to all bystanders. Lafano made his confession, received the sacraments, and soon after expired. This fact was attested in the city as miraculous."*

At Alcala, Ignatius was accused before the bishop's grand-vicar of having taught herefy, and was sentenced to forty-two days' solitary imprisonment; although his discourses are said to have converted a number of loose livers, and among the rest, one of the most wealthy prelates in Spain. Driven about and finding no rest, like the fated Orestes pursued by the Furies, he arrived at Paris in February, 1528. In this city he spent two years learning Latin and graduating in philosophy. First of all he took up his abode in Montaigne college, but some one having

* Lives of the Saints, vol. vii. (S. Ignatius, C.)

robbed him of his effects, he removed to the hospital of St. James, and subsisted by beggary. Once he came to England, during the vacation, to obtain contributions from the Spanish merchants settled there. At the college of St. Barbara he had very narrowly escaped a public whipping from all the inmates, as the principal thought his ascetic piety, and his religious tutelage of some of the scholars, interfered with their proficiency in learning. At the sound of a bell the whole college assembled in the hall, with rods in their hands, to scourge this "corrupter of youth," who had been condemned to such signal chastisement. When the principal appeared in the hall, and the students stood ready for action, awaiting but the word of command, they were amazed to find Govea, so far from ordering flagellation, cast himself at the feet of Ignatius. Then rising he pronounced him a saint! This humiliating act of reparation was not without its effect. Several of his fellow-students became attached to him and his exercises, and even the professors used occasionally to ask his advice on difficult subjects.

At the Dominican convent, to which Ignatius repaired to study theology, he made

several conquests, among the most remarkable of whom was the famous Francis Xavier, who afterwards occupied no mean post in the society which Ignatius originated. The strange methods by which he sought to reclaim dissolute persons are not the least remarkable incidents in his wonderful career. Upon one occasion, when he found a young man engaged in illicit commerce with a woman of the city, he stood in a frozen pond up to his neck ; and as the delinquent passed by in the night, Ignatius cried out to him : “ Whither art thou going ? Dost thou not hear the thunder of Divine justice over thy head, ready to break upon thee ? Go then ; satisfy thy brutish passion : here I will suffer for thee to appease heaven ! ” The lewd young man became first affrighted, then penitent, and afterwards altered his life.

Ignatius, with his companions Le Fevre, Xavier, Laynez, and a few others, numerically not exceeding nine, formed the nucleus from which this colossal society sprung. Having partaken of the sacrament in the subterranean chapel of Montmartre, each audibly pronounced a vow to renounce the world and preach christianity in Palestine, or if this proved impracticable, to offer

themselves and their services to the pope, to be disposed of at his pleasure. These men, although of different nations, habits, dispositions, and attainments, coalesced notwithstanding, and blindly devoted themselves body and soul to their master Loyola, who afterwards enjoined his disciples to adopt the cognomen of the Society of Jesus.

Shortly afterwards, the Venetians declared war against the Turks; so that the darling project of Loyola became in consequence hopelessly frustrated. He accordingly set out singly for Rome to cast himself at the feet of the pope, as he had solemnly promised should anything occur to interrupt his plans. On the road, and while Ignatius was praying in a little oratory, he fell into a rapture, during which he saw the eternal Father presenting him (Ignatius) to his Son, who bore on his shoulder a heavy cross, and shone with inexpressible lustre. Addressing himself to Ignatius, he sweetly said: "*Ego vobis Romæ propitius ero.*" "I will be favourable to thee at Rome!"* This vision Ignatius made known to his followers, who became

* Bonhour's *La Vie de S. Ignace.*

inspired with greater confidence in the success of their leader's mission.

Paul III. received Ignatius very graciously, and rather encouraged his project than otherwise. Upon this he summoned his disciples from Vicenza to the holy city. They shortly followed and formed themselves into a religious order. The pope directed three cardinals to examine the merits of the application made to him. These at first pronounced in opposition to it, but were induced suddenly—by a miracle of course!—to alter their opinion. The pope then admitted into holy orders all those who were not priests, and issued a bull of constitution for the Society dated the 27th of September, 1540. This bull, however, was embarrassed by some disagreeable restrictions, one of which was that the number of the professed should be limited to sixty. Three years after, A. D. 1543, these restrictions were abolished by another papal mandate, when Ignatius was appointed general. The famous Constitutions were next framed, some affirm by Ignatius himself, for which Pasquier pronounced him “one of the most subtle and skilful politicians which his age produced.” Others, however, among whom are writers

of authority, deny his title to the composition,* although for two hundred years the world had not heard of it. The Society soon afterwards wonderfully augmented in power, affluence, and popularity. In less than half a century its professed members exceeded ten thousand. A century later found it increased to twenty thousand, and several hundred colleges. Although the members of the Society spread themselves over the world, yet Ignatius continued to reside at Rome until his death, which took place on

* Not only protestants, but also many Roman catholics, and they men of learning and discrimination, deny that Loyola had learning enough to compose the writings ascribed to him, or genius enough to form such a society as originated from him. On the contrary, they say, that some very wise and extraordinary men guided and controlled his mind; and that better educated men than he composed the works which bear his name. See Mich. Geddes, *Miscellaneous Tracts*, vol. iii. p. 429. Most of his writings are supposed to have been produced by John de Palanco, his secretary. See M. V. la Croze *Histoire du Christ, d'Ethiopie*, pp. 55, 271. His Spiritual Exercises (*Exercitia Spiritualia*), the Benedictines say, were transcribed from the work of a Spanish Benedictine, whose name was Cisneros. See Jordan, *Vie de M. La Croze*, p. 83. The constitutions of the society, it is said, were drawn up by Lainez and Salmeron, learned men among his first associates. See *Histoire de la Compagnie de Jésus*, tom. i. p. 115.—Note in *Moth. Eccles. Hist.* vol. iii. p. 268. (Soames.)

the 31st of July, 1556, when his Company numbered over one thousand persons. He was beatified by Paul V. A. D. 1609; and finally canonized by Gregory XV. A. D. 1622. Thus arose the Society of Jesus; an order that although fanned into being by one pope, yet had to be suppressed by another,* when the crowned heads of Europe, emperors of Asia, chieftains of Africa, and commonwealths of America, conjointly united in its condemnation. But as a modern writer wisely remarks: "The pope had suppressed the Society, but the Jesuits would never be suppressed. Expelled from their strongholds they soon threw up other entrenchments—as the terrible angel driven out of heaven flung himself into the Eden of the earth, where he quickly found a footing."†

As it would be preposterous to attempt giving anything like even a condensed history of this singular society within our necessarily circumscribed limits, I must accordingly content myself (and so I trust will the reader) with the account of the rise and establishment of the

* Clement XIV. July, A. D. 1773.

† The Novitiate, or the Jesuit in Training, by A. Steinmitz.

order, which I have already furnished ; at the same time referring those who seek further information as to the subsequent workings of that famous body, to Mr. Steinmitz's *History of the Jesuits* ; a work of the most talented and interesting kind. It may not however be out of place just to record the reproach cast upon the Society by Clement VIII. in 1692—a pontiff who personally presided at a general chapter of the order. “Curiosity,” he observes, “induces them to intrude everywhere, and chiefly into the confessionals, that they may ascertain from their penitent whatever occurs in his home, among the children, the domestics, and the other inmates or visitors of the house, and even all that is occurring in the neighbourhood. If they confess a prince they contrive to govern his whole family ; they endeavour even to govern his states by inspiring him with the idea that nothing can go well without their oversight and direction.”* Really, upon reviewing the many fearful and fiery ordeals through which the Company has passed, there appears some force in what its founder said : “Being begun by God the Society must be preserved by divine

* Théâtre Jéfuitique, p. ii. 4.

and not human means.”* “*Ad majorem Dei gloriam*” is a principle which, in the hands of the Jesuits, have been the bane and curse of nations.

The Jesuits have several institutes or colleges in this and the sister isle; the most flourishing of which are Clongowes, near Dublin, and Stonyhurst in Lancashire. The latter was presented to the Jesuits[†] by Thomas Weld, of Lulworth, who as an additional benefaction gave his son to the Society. The Jesuits made considerable additions to the property by building three establishments, viz., the house of Probation, the Seminary, and the house for the Professed. Besides these a magnificent church has been erected—the whole beautified and enhanced by a charming demesne of some thousand acres of excellent land.† A new and splendid church has lately been completed in the metropolis; so it would appear that the clauses in the Catholic Relief Bill of 1829, which contains some provisions for the gradual extinction of Jesuitism in this land, have remained literally a *dead letter*. “Wherever the Jesuits are

* Conf. Lec. I. p. 61.

† *Vide* The Novitiate; etc., by A. Steinmitz.

admitted," said the emperor Napoleon, "they will be masters, cost what it may."*

Internal Discipline of Religious Houses.

THE rules relating to discipline are pretty much alike in all conventual establishments, with the exception of those of the Cistercian and Oratorian orders previously described. From the following succinct account, the reader will be able to form a tolerably accurate conception of the daily monotonous routine of monastic duties :—

The "religious" are summoned throughout the year at 5 A. M. to their diurnal exercises, by the ringing of a large bell, the sound of which not only distinctly reverberates along the corridors of the cloister, but too often disturbs the adjoining neighbourhood, and proves a source of annoyance to the inhabitants, who do not like their vigils to be thus summarily interrupted by the harsh "ding-dong" of "the convent bell." In the dormitory there is an alarum-clock, which is set over-night, and entrusted to the junior novice, who has to be

* Récits de la captivité de l'Emp. Napol. à Sainte Hélène, par M. le Général Montholon.

up a quarter of an hour before the rest of the community. Upon the first sound of the bell each one rises, and after dressing proceeds to the domestic chapel. During the winter season there is some little inconvenience experienced as no lights are allowed. Five minutes after the bell rings the community are expected to be in their proper places, when the exercises open with a meditation, which lasts nearly an hour. The subject of the meditation continually varies, and is conducted thus. The superior generally, or his deputy, reads in an audible voice some sentence out of a book, which is presumed to be silently reflected upon for a quarter of an hour, although one has occasionally a terrible combat with Morpheus, who too often becomes the victor! Another sentence is then repeated; and so on until the expiration of the allotted period, the religious kneeling and sitting alternately. At six o'clock the "*Angelus Domini*" is said, the large bell being kept ringing the while. Then begins the "office" of the church,* which occupies about thirty minutes, when the devotions are for a while interrupted. The community then retire

* The Jesuits are relieved from the obligation of repeating the daily office.

to their respective cells, and the novices to their dormitory, when the process of dressing commences. During the ablution no part of the dress is removed, it being considered repugnant to modesty to act otherwise. The religious next hear mass, which is celebrated by the chaplain either in the domestic chapel, in the church adjoining, or else in a contiguous place of worship. The remaining portion of the morning is occupied in study, short religious exercises, and breakfast. During meals the strictest silence is observed; but in order to relieve the *tedium* which would otherwise exist, one of the novices reads a portion of some book assigned by the superior. The remainder part of the day, until evening, is passed in the performance of duties peculiar to each religious sodality. The "brothers" and "sisters" of most communities have the care of schools, and the instruction of adults, while other orders are devoted to external employments, such as visiting and attending the sick, etc. And really, although I regard the monastic system as highly reprehensible, yet I cannot but admire the moral heroism of those unassuming women, many of whom forsake not only the comforts but the refinements and elegances of life, for

the hard pillow, the cheerless chamber, the frugal table, the plain attire, the stringent rule, to soothe the pangs of suffering—administer help to the destitute—perform the meanest offices for the sick—and pour the oil of joy into the mourner's bosom. Who that has observed the nuns performing their voluntary offices of mercy, and contrasted them with the paid "sisters" of our hospitals, but has been struck with the mild, affable, gentle, loving spirit of the one, with the harsh, severe, unwilling, unfeeling manner of the other? And here I cannot refrain from paying a passing tribute of respect to our own Miss Nightingale, whose chivalrous self-sacrifice, noble spirit of endurance, and devotion to works of charity, deserve our highest commendation, and shall for ever render her name emblazoned on her country's annals.

But to resume. Two hours each day are set apart for what is termed "recreation;" and certainly such an arrangement is most beneficial, as it renders the *ennui* and solitariness of the cloister more supportable and, physiologically speaking, less injurious. There are special exercises for every hour; so that such a thing as leisure is practically unknown. At 9 P. M. the entire community assemble for

prayers—the professed in the domestic chapel—the novices in their oratory—after which confessions are publicly made of breaches of rule, the religious in turn prostrating themselves in the middle of the chapel ; and upon begging for and receiving suitable penance, kiss the floor in token of their acquiescence and humility. Should they happen through oversight or otherwise to neglect manifesting their conscience, there is generally some person present to make the imputation, as each one is continually watched by the other with scrupulous exactness ; and as individuals can see the faults of others better than their own, this peculiarity is taken into account and employed with advantage. At ten o'clock the community must be in bed, when all lights are extinguished ; and in order to guard against any innovation in this respect, a party goes to the door of each cell, which is never suffered to be closed, and cries "*Benedicamus Domino.*" This general salutation immediately meets with the response "*Deo gratias,*" from the individual within.

The regulations pertaining to novices are much more precise and rigorous than those laid down for the guidance of the professed. The former are not permitted to mingle or

converse with the latter, nor even (if the community be not what is called inclosed) to occupy the same footway when outside the precincts of the cloister. On first entering into the institute the subject is embraced by the novices, and conducted to the apartments termed the "noviciate." After the expiration of a few days a "retreat" is entered upon, which lasts twenty or thirty days together, during which tiresome period the strictest silence is imposed. Human nature is scarcely proof against the psychological and physical evils resulting from so unremitting a course of mental exercises as is assigned to postulants during this and succeeding seasons of trial, by the director of novices, who keeps a watchful and scrutinising eye upon all their actions.

I well remember upon first entering the convent being conducted to the noviciate by the master of novices, a grave, strict, but withal kind-hearted man, when my attention was directed to a statue of the Virgin, composed of plaster-of-Paris, which stood upon a small altar at the extremity of the corridor. Fully cognisant of the distressing circumstances under which I had deserted the maternal roof—for I considered it a pious severity and a positive duty to keep my mother

ignorant of the rash step I had taken*—my spiritual director, in the most solemn and impressive manner, thus addressed me:—"You have, my dear young brother, voluntarily separated yourself from your dearest connections, closed all avenues to distinction and emolument which the great world opens up to talent, effort, and perseverance; and with a heroism praiseworthy and even meritorious, have cut asunder even the strong ties of blood. But you have made a profitable exchange in forsaking an earthly for a heavenly parent." Then, pointing to the figure, he exclaimed: "Behold your mother now! Her affection towards you will never become alienated or abated; and if you but prove yourself a faithful imitator of her virtuous and angelic life, she will finally conduct you to glory!" I have frequently observed the novices in the warmth and enthusiasm of their devotion, kiss with intense ardour the feet of this image of clay; and none either passed or repassed without making obeisance to the Madonna.

* Si currerint tibi Pater et Mater ingressuro Monasterium, et monstraverint ubera et lacrymis suis te voluerint retrahere, contemne lacrymas, et conculca pedibus parentes, nudusque fuge ad crucem Christi.—*Vox Hieronimi; impia hæc et diabolica vox Lutherus.*

I can truly say with Melancthon; "I shudder when I think of the honour which I paid to images when I was in the papacy."*

After the expiration of a few months the postulant receives the "habit" of his order, when an imposing and *ad captandum* ceremony attends its reception. On this occasion, strange to say, he renounces the name conferred at baptism, and assumes that of some saint, under the direction of the master, by which he is afterwards designated. It is a common occurrence for men to take women's names, and *vice versa*. The monks having in heaven the Virgin Mary, the image of a woman—an image of love—can perhaps more easily dispense with *real* women; and just in proportion as the *ideal* increases in intensity. The nuns, on the other hand, have in St. Joseph an object of *ideal* love, which supplies the natural craving after the *human* love. Mr. Steinmitz† alludes to this important psychological fact—a fact, however, by no means incomprehensible, but perfectly intelligible to those who are acquainted with the philosophy of the human mind.

* Cohorresco quando cogito quomodo ipse accefferim ad statuas in papatu.—*Explicat. Evang.*

† *Vide* The Noviciate; or a Year with the English Jesuits.

Strict discipline regulates every movement of the young disciples. They are seldom permitted to go beyond the precincts of their gloomy dwelling; and even when this privilege is extended, they are invariably accompanied by a professed brother, though generally by the party to whom the responsibility of their training is entrusted. During the probationary term, which is usually about two years, the novices are occasionally obliged to perform menial offices, such as cleaning their own shoes, dusting the windows, sweeping the reception-rooms, weeding the garden, etc., in order to exercise them in humility and self-denial. A neglect of the duty imposed upon them would subject the offenders to the mortification of taking their meals kneeling—a punishment to which I was once subjected—or to some other penitential act. Habitual disobedience would either disqualify for profession, or else procure expulsion from the institute. “In a convent in the United States,” observes Cobbin, “the inmates, for slight acts of disobedience, were subjected to many austere penances, as remaining prostrate for a length of time, making the sign of the cross on the floor with the tongue, eating a crust of bread for the morning’s ‘portion,’

kissing the floor, kneeling for a considerable time, and other similar degradations.”*

The novices are seldom permitted to have interviews, or enter into correspondence, with their nearest relatives; nor are they suffered to receive letters, unless such epistolary communications be first submitted to the strict *surveillance* of the superior. Not infrequently such correspondence is not only Grahamised, but positively suppressed. Any intercourse with seculars, be they even one's parents, is considered most prejudicial to the religious state. “A religious,” writes Liguori, “must know, that he cannot write to his parents or friends without the permission of the superior, nor without showing him the letters. To omit this would be a great fault, and one could not be excused, but severely punished; as from hence a thousand disorders might arise to occasion the ruin of the community. The novices above all ought to know, that during their noviciate this practice is most rigorously attended to, and it is sometimes with difficulty that they obtain permission to speak or write to their parents.”† Neither is one

* Book of Popery.

† St. Alph. Liguori on the Religious State. Trans. from the Italian, by a Priest of the Order of Charity.

brother allowed to hold converse with, or to enter the cell of another, except he has direct permission so to do. Hence in monastic communities all are strangers to each other; and every impediment is placed in the way of particular intimacies. Were such a thing however observed, a remedy would speedily be applied by dispatching one of the parties to some other and distant institute of the order. By this means all caballings are prevented; and I dare say such an arrangement is found absolutely necessary to the maintenance of authority and healthy discipline. Once in each day, or more frequently, the younger brothers are required to make a public manifestation of their faults to the master of novices or his deputy; and after receiving absolution, and being enjoined a suitable penance, they kiss the floor as an expression of their obedience. The habit of self-denial is especially encouraged in the novices; and is carried even to things innocent and harmless in themselves. However excellent the principle of self-denial is, yet the abuse of it is certainly condemnatory. For instance, a religious is not suffered to indulge curiosity, by gazing upon different objects when in choir or the refectory; to assume a slothful posture in sit-

ting, such as leaning against anything, putting one leg on the other, or crossing the feet. They are likewise encouraged to avoid dainty fruits, or whatever is calculated to please the palate, even should such delicacies be placed upon the table. Everything that administers delight to the senses is regarded as sin, not excepting the very essential duty of eating; and no one is suffered to partake of food except at the appointed hour for meals. It is said that when St. Theresa heard that some of her nuns had asked permission from the provincial to keep edibles in their cells she upbraided them very severely, and said that their request if complied with would lead to the destruction of the monastery.* Perhaps there is no discipline so strongly encouraged as that of mortifying the senses, especially that of taste. We may judge of this from the writings put into the hands of the religious, of which those of St. Liguori are the most in vogue. This author speaking of the necessity for such self-denial, observes:—"In his Dialogues St. Gregory relates, that in a monastery of Sienna, there was a monk who led a very exemplary life. When he was at the point

* Liguori's True Spouse of Christ, chap. viii. sec. 11.

of death, the religious, expecting to be edified by his last moments, gathered around him, 'Brethren,' said the dying man, 'when you fasted I eat in private, and therefore I have already been delivered over to Satan, who now deprives me of life, and carries away my soul.' After these words he expired." The same author relates, "that a certain nun, seeing in the garden a very fine lettuce, pulled and eat it, in opposition to her rule. She was instantly possessed by a devil who tormented her grievously. Her companions called to her aid the holy Abbot Equitius, at whose arrival the demon exclaimed, '*What evil have I done? I sat upon the lettuce: she came and eat it.*' The holy man by his commands compelled the evil spirit to depart." In the Cistercian records we read, that "St. Bernard, once visiting his novices, called aside a brother whose name was Acardo, and said that a certain novice, to whom he pointed, would on that day fly from the monastery. The saint begged of Acardo to watch the novice, and to prevent his escape. On the following night, Acardo saw a demon approach the novice, and by the savoury smell of a roasted fowl, tempt him to desire forbidden food. The unhappy young man awoke, and, yielding to the temptation, took

his clothes, and prepared to leave the monastery. Acardo endeavoured, in vain, to convince him of the dangers to which he would be exposed in the world. Overcome by gulosity, the wretched man obstinately resolved to return to the world, where he died miserably.* The purpose and tendency of such writings cannot be mistaken, nor can they fail to make the young and docile novice morbidly susceptible on this point. It is sad that Religion which "never was designed to make our pleasures less," should be thus sacrilegiously tortured to suit the ascetic tastes and abnormal tendencies of some minds.

In the domestic chapel of each monastery, which is often elaborately and sometimes gorgeously decorated, the consecrated bread is constantly preserved, and a perpetual light, or vestal fire, kept continually burning before the altar. A brother is specially appointed to the duties of the sacristy, who has to attend to the trimming of the lamp, etc. Various sacred relics, richly enshrined, are placed on the altar, not so much to attract attention as to elicit pious and devotional feelings.† The

* Liguori's True Spouse of Christ, chap. viii. sec. ii.

† The Pagans in like manner consecrated to their gods a variety of images, both embossed and painted, and placed

first Sunday in each month, and the nine days preceding the festival of the Incarnation, are seasons of the greatest solemnity. The members of most religious fraternities, as soon as professed, make perpetual vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Some institutes are under the jurisdiction of the prelates in whose respective dioceses they are established; while others, like the Jesuit orders, acknowledge no authority save that of their provincials and the pope.

Having thus given a faint outline of the discipline adopted in conventual establishments, I would conclude with the remark, that there are in these institutes, many individuals possessed of cultivated minds, untarnished morals, and enlarged hearts, the sincerity of whose profession cannot for an instant be disputed; individuals moreover who, I hesitate not to affirm, were it not for the peculiar system to which they are bound, would become luminaries of the first magnitude in the scientific, and be ornaments and blessings to the social world.

them in their temples, raised them upon their altars, enshrined them in a costly manner, crowned them with flowers, and invoked them with incense.—*Huit Serm. sur l'Examen des Religions*, p. 264. edit. Genève, 1716.



CHAPTER VIII.

The pernicious tendency of Monasticism, viewed in a social, moral, physical, and political aspect.

“Separation from the world, from matter, from the Life of the species has its practical realization in monasticism.”—
FEÜERBACH.



NOW proceed to exhibit a few of the more prominent evils of the monastic system—a superstition begotten of ignorance and fanaticism, in the formation and completion of which the demon of ingenuity had lent his willing aid,—which has long been fostered by a class of misanthropic men, and held forth to the world as intrinsically noble and divine, fraught with the choicest benefits to its professors, as well as to the community at large, and from which, to borrow the questionable phraseology of Dr. M'Hale, “the odour of

sanctity is diffused throughout the earth." But every unprejudiced mind, that has thoughtfully and thoroughly investigated monasticism in its bearings upon morals, society, and the individual, must I am persuaded form a very opposite and a more correct conception. For never, I am decidedly convinced, was there a system devised by the head and executed by the strategy of man, under the specious garb of godliness, from which so many sad disorders, and such rank impiety have emanated.

My future remarks I would have understood as applying wholly and solely to modern monasticism. After all, we have little to do with the monastics of olden times. Their manner of life was just in keeping with the ignorance, and consequent barbarities and vices of the ages in which they flourished. We should not view the phases of modern monasticism through the false medium of the past; nor visit the follies, immoralities, and crimes once characteristic of the system upon those who, not having been the perpetrators of such wickedness, should not be participants in its condemnation. On this ground simply I should never have penned a syllable condemnatory of the monastic life. As well

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and with equal propriety may Englishmen at the present day be saddled with the grievous defects of our painted Saxon progenitors, or protestant clergymen be denounced because forsooth of the errors, shortcomings, or possibly iniquities, of those who ushered in the Reformation. I do not, however, mean to convey the impression, that ecclesiastical history throws no light upon the injurious tendency of monachism; but merely state, that the system has assumed a widely different aspect to that which it was wont to wear. Whatever be the cause of this favourable transformation, the fact itself is patent. Undoubtedly there still are men under the monastic garb to whom the language of "the jolly friar" in the song is painfully applicable :—

" I'm clothed in *sack-cloth* for my sin;
With old *sack-wine* I'm lined within !"

thereby making "good cheer" their passport to heaven ! Truly, he who leads a *good life* is sure to *live well*; and if "veiled nuns and cowed men" do not strictly act up to the spirit of the axiom, they at least, fail not occasionally to lose sight of it in its literal and grosser signification. But this peculiar

species of biped has always existed, and will exist : and if such novelists as Charles Dickens and Samuel Warren are of any authority, does not exclusively belong to “ cloisters grey ” or alone, “ court the solitary shade ! ”

The ecclesiastical historian, alluding to the morals of the monastics of the xvth century, admits even an improvement at that period. He observes :—“ In most of the governors of monasteries, there are things which deserve the severest reprehension ; nor are idleness, gluttony, ignorance, knavery, quarrels, lasciviousness, and the other once prevalent vices of the monasteries, entirely expelled and banished from them. Yet it would be uncandid to deny, that in many countries the morals of the monks are restrained by stricter rules, and that the remaining vestiges of the ancient profligacy are at least concealed more carefully.* Further improvements both in morals and discipline have doubtless taken place since. So that the grave crimes charged against monastics by such writers of celebrity and undoubted candour as have already been adduced, cannot

* Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. vol. iii. p. 275. (Soames.)

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now be laid at their door. The light of the nineteenth century and the purifying radiations of the printing press have enlightened their darkness—not altogether, but in part. Monasticism certainly is not that gross, fœtid, unsightly imposthume it was. Nevertheless it must not be approved of, or tolerated, but rather regarded with the greater suspicion and abhorrence owing to the additional power which it in consequence exercises. The system is unnatural and injurious whatever be the practices of those who uphold it ; and is not simply detrimental to the individuals themselves, but proves a bane and a barrier to the well-being and progress of society. By its shade a barren tree is pernicious not only to itself, but likewise to the fertile plants by which it is surrounded.

I. Monasticism is productive of *social* evils.

We are not our own. Hence we cannot lawfully dispose of ourselves as we list. Society, home, kindred, the manifold relations in which we stand to others, prevent this. We cannot with impunity refrain from the performance of duties which the laws of society impose, and to which those of Nature respond. Man was not made to live alone. Such an abnormal condition, although it may

gratify ascetic minds, is neither desirable nor good. It gives a precedent for a mode of life which, if much followed, would place a great barrier in the way of the world's progress. Civilization could not have a more formidable foe. It is a daring defiance of the divine command : " Increase and replenish the earth." Nothing can justify such a system, devoid almost of one atoning feature. When persons combine in society they are necessarily compelled to obey certain laws, which, even in their rudest form, approach the laws of conscience. Otherwise, how is society possible? Every one, therefore, is obliged to sacrifice private inclination to the public good. Duty extends her mighty solemn chain unbrokenly from the lowest to the highest condition. 'Tis a fearful thing to wander out of the path of duty. Were but one of those numberless planets aloft in space to deviate from its assigned course, there is no telling the appalling results that would inevitably follow. The whole solar system might receive a shock that, shaking worlds to their centre, would involve them in final ruin ! What grand and pregnant lessons Nature teaches, did mankind but listen to her silent monitions !

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The monastic system severs social ties. It sets at defiance the claims which society has upon the individual, and by so doing renders man irresponsible to human laws. It moreover deceives by holding out false notions of happiness which never can be realized. St. Sebastian says, that if mankind could but know the peace which the monastic state affords, "the entire world would become a convent." Another affirms, that if this were sufficiently understood, "men would scale the convent walls on every side in order to become monks!"* Ruffinus declares, that "without a doubt the earth is preserved from ruin by the merits of the religious."† The tendency of this hateful system is to dissolve society altogether by breaking up social relationships; and by checking the production of the human species to interfere with the divine purpose in man's creation. The principle of monasticism is pre-eminently anti-social, and as such should be denounced by the philanthropist, and regarded as the bane of whatever is good and lovely in our common human nature. The opinion of all who

* Liguori on the Religious State, cons. vi.

† Pro. in vita Patr. (Quoted by Liguori.)

do not take a contracted view of the subject, concurs in the sacred record, that "it is not good for man to be alone," and that monastic indolence and seclusion are incompatible with the purposes and ends of life. The wisdom of Heaven certainly never designed or contemplated such a scheme. For as a learned writer observes, "A wise and intelligent author must propose some end in the production of things; but the end, whatever it was, could never be promoted by indolence and sloth. Non-activity is the next to non-existence, and could no more answer any useful purpose. A production of stupid, unmoving, passive beings, could be no other than a general chaos, which could prove of no further utility than as affording matter for future motion, harmony, and order."*

Doubtless there are many who enter the cloister with feelings bordering upon rapture, fondly expecting to realise a hiding-place from the storm, a covert from the tempest, and a secure haven, "where no wind can reach them, and no wave can harm," but who afterwards discover to their unutterable sorrow, that they have followed the "*ignis fatuus*" of their fervid imagina-

* Dodwell.

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tions, are more tempest-tossed than ever, and that instead of landing safely on a sheltered island, they have but alighted on a dangerous quicksand. It is sad enough when the deluded enthusiast voluntarily embraces the monastic state, wherein is anticipated the realization of vain and sanguine expectations, unhappily but too frequently frustrated. But, is it not horrifying to think that individuals whose inclinations and feelings revolt at, and are entirely adverse to, such a retreat, should be compelled, as well by intimidation as entreaty, to adopt so ungenial a condition. I have witnessed an instance of this cruelty; and cruelty is by far too mild a term for such barbarous conduct:—

A Roman catholic curate, with whom I was on terms of intimacy, had a sister, an intelligent and interesting young lady, residing with him. In consequence of slender pecuniary resources, he determined upon resigning his dwelling, and taking up his future abode with the priest of the parish. His first step therefore was to solicit, and finally to compel, his sister to enter a community of inclosed nuns in the same town where I, when a novice, was located. Notwithstanding her repeated refusals and entreaties, and the in-

terposition of a younger brother, who had just returned from college for the vacation, she was compelled, though in the bitterness of grief, to comply with the priest's unnatural demand ! Previous to entering the convent, she declared to me how painful it was to her feelings, and how deeply it grieved her, to be obliged to become incarcerated as a nun in opposition to her wishes. Frequently have I beheld her bathed in tears, and indulging in secret the grief of her heart, at the consideration of the unhappy destiny that awaited her. This young lady still remains in the gloomy cloister, having taken perpetual vows, and received the black veil—fit emblem of that sorrow, which in all probability consumes, like a canker, the heart of her who wears it ! This is not a solitary instance of the barbarity exercised in order to compel persons to become secluded from the world ; although many who are ignorant of the system foolishly imagine that the act is a voluntary one. Thus it is that even the signification of words is changed ; weakness, which yields to force, is termed *docility*, and the *yes* extorted by violence, is called *consent* !

The monastic establishments in our own country at the present day are mainly sustained

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by the influx of young people who, actuated by a variety of motives, sacrifice their fortunes, affections, and lives, at the shrine of this modern Moloch. I do not believe that the young catholic mind of this nation has, generally speaking, any particular predilections or prepossessions for such a strange and injurious condition of existence. Hence postulants, for the most part, have to be procured from countries less remarkable for the very unpoetical quality of *common sense*. For my own part, I confess that there is a kind of infatuation or charm around monastic retreats which attracts the beholder. The solemn stillness that reigns around them; the sombre countenances and peculiar attire of their inmates; the religious services—all impress the mind deeply, and almost force from the heart the ejaculation: “It is good to be here!” I do not wonder that so many youthful minds should thus be led astray. Fancying a very Eden near to them, and a holy delight to be at once attained, but never dreaming of the long, difficult way between, or of the torment which their dreadful after-thoughts occasion,—they rush blindly to their ruin.

Burton, in one of his writings,* quotes a

* Life and Correspondence of David Hume.

fragment which is too valuable not to be transcribed, especially as it refers to this very mystic and anti-social mental condition of which I have been speaking. He remarks : —“ 'Tis observable of the human mind that when it is smitten with any idea of merit or perfection beyond what its faculties can attain, and in the pursuit of which it uses not reason and experience for its guide, it knows no mean, but as it gives the rein and even adds the spur to every florid conceit or fancy, runs in a moment quite wide of nature. Thus we find when, without discretion, it indulges its devout terrors, that working on such fairy ground, it quickly buries itself in its own whimsies and chimeras, and raises up to itself a new set of passions, affections, desires, objects, and in short a perfectly new world of its own, inhabited by different beings, and regulated by different laws from that of ours. In this new world 'tis so possessed that it can endure no interruption from the old ; but as nature is apt still on every occasion to recall it thither, it must undermine it by art, and retiring altogether from the commerce of mankind, if it be so bent upon its religious exercise, from the mystic by an easy transition, degenerate into the hermit.” Hence, prompted

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by this fatal pietism, many are foolishly induced to adopt a life of sequestration from the world ; but in the end, and not infrequently when it is too late to attempt to free themselves from the grasp of their spiritual rulers, they are brought to see and regret the rash act which binds them to the cloister, as well as the vanity of having pursued the phantom of monastic felicity !

Further : Monasticism is productive of *moral evils*.

Not only is monasticism inimical to social well-being by virtually disannulling and opposing those laws by which society is governed, but it likewise snaps asunder and uproots the holiest affections of the heart. It hesitates not to set aside that moral law which commands us to honour and obey our parents, and teaches that the pure love of the creature is not harmless but injurious ; whilst, O grief of griefs ! it gives religion as its warrant. To some these assertions may appear gratuitous. If so, it is for want of being sufficiently informed on the subject. But, as I purpose strictly adhering to the Shakspearian maxim, “ Nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice,” and as I wish the reader to give me the character of being dispassionate, I shall

furnish satisfactory authority for the statements I advance. The council of Toledo, treating of the monastic state, says emphatically: "After children reach the age of fourteen years it is for them to follow their own wishes in this respect, either with the consent of their parents, or according to their own devotion, *independently of the direction of parents.*"* This opinion has also been confirmed by several councils. Some of the Fathers, and other theological writers, take precisely the same view. St. Thomas says: "Slaves are not bound to obey their masters, nor children their parents, in the question of contracting marriage, or of entering into religion, or of any other like determination."† Pinamonti goes so far as to affirm, that a child is not conscientiously obliged to ask even the advice of his parents if the cloister be the bent of his inclination. Liguori,

* "Parentibus filios religioni tradere, non amplius quam usque ad decimum quartum eorum ætatis annum, licentia poterit esse. Postea vero, an cum voluntatæ parentum, an suæ devotionis sit solitarium votum, erit filiis licitum religionis assumere cultum."

† Non tenentur nec servi dominis, nec filii parentibus obedire de matrimonio contrahendo, vel virginitate servanda, vel aliquo alio hujusmodi—II. II. q. 10. a. 5.

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taking up the same theme, observes: "If it would be a great error to seek the counsel of our parents, it would be a still greater error to desire their consent and to ask it of them, for by so doing we run the risk of losing our vocation."* Then for the encouragement of weak or unstable souls he continues: "There have been several saints who, when they were called to leave the world, quitted their father's house without even making their desire known to them. Thus did St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Francis Xavier, St. Philip Neri, etc., and we know that the Lord showed by miracles that he approved their glorious flight. St. Peter of Alcantra, in going from the house of his mother to the monastery found his flight impeded by a large river, which he did not know how to cross. He recommended himself to God, and was instantly transported to the opposite side. So, in a similar case, Stanislaus Kostka, when fleeing from his home without his father's permission, was closely followed by his brother in a carriage, desirous to overtake him; but, just as he was on the point of doing this the horses stopped suddenly, and by

* Liguori on the Religious State.

no whipping could be induced to advance ; but after a short interval they turned round and quickly proceeded back to the town. We have also the example of the blessed Oringa of Valdarno, in Tuscany, who being promised by her parents in marriage to a young man fled from him to consecrate herself to God. Finding her way stopped by the river Arno, she prayed for a few moments, when she beheld the waters open, which rising on each side, like two crystal walls, afforded her a dry passage.”*

Liguori, with all the ingenuity of a casuist, presupposes a case where a child bent upon entering a cloister had no reason to dread the refusal of his parents ; and asks if under such circumstances, it was proper to solicit their blessing. He replies in the negative ; and strongly disapproves of such “ pharisaical scruples ;” adding, “ If you are called to leave the world be careful that your resolution be not discovered to your parents, but be content with the blessing of God.”† Another of the schoolmen‡ remarks, that if such vocation should come from the devil it

* Liguori on the Religious State.

† Ibid.

‡ St. Thomas.

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ought to be embraced, as a wife counsel given by an enemy ! The principle is, that monastic obedience supercedes and dispenses with all other obedience, even that which human and divine laws have pronounced most sacred and inviolable.* It is stated in a work of high authority, written by a celebrated Spanish Jesuit, that if parents should chance to lie in the way, or become an impediment to such of their children as were desirous of embracing a “religious life,” as the monastic profession is unduly termed, “*they should walk over them !*”†—

“Ingratitude ! thou marble-hearted fiend,
More hideous when thou shew’st thee in a child
Than the sea-monster !”

I feel very tenderly on this point, and can speak from bitter, painful experience. Being an only son, and pretty clearly anticipating the fierce opposition I should otherwise have

* Francis de Sales said :—*Nunquam perit obediens. S. Philippus Neri afferebat quod qui confessario obsequabatur, se certum faciebat, Deo non redditurum de suis operibus rationem. Contra verò, aiebat S. Joannes de Cruce, non satisfieri de eo quod dicit confessarius, esse superbiam, et in Fidem peccatum.*—*Liguori*, i. 5.

† *Exercicio de Perfec. Por el Padre Alon. Rodriguez, de la Compaña de Jesus. Sevilla, Año. M.DC.IX.*

to encounter, I entered a convent without imparting to my mother the least intimation of my purpose; nor had she the remotest idea of where I was for some days, until I dispatched from the novitiate in Dublin, through the superior-general of the Order, a letter acquainting her with the rash step I had taken. This letter, I need scarcely say, underwent a strict *surveillance* before it was suffered to pass on its destination. Of course, the heads of the convent planned and aided my escape, and warmly approved of my resolution. A dignitary of my acquaintance to whom I had, in the capacity of confessor, communicated my design, certainly, I must do him the justice to say, did not altogether approve of the idea that I should desert my widowed mother's house without asking at least for the maternal benediction; but added he, "that is what I would do were the case my own; yet I should not care, under the circumstances, whether I received *a blessing or a curse!*" A bishop also assured me that, having examined into the particulars of my case, I was not under any moral obligation to act otherwise than I had intended. I have no desire whatever to speak harshly of those who out of

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personal kindness favoured a scheme which has since afforded me the bitterest regret; and merely mention these facts as corroborative of my former statements. It is recorded, that after the celebrated Madame de Chantal, of the *Visitation*, had forced from her father his consent, who upon acceding to her request exclaimed, "O God! it will cost me my life!"—young Chantal, her son ran to her, clasped her about the neck, and by the most endearing expressions endeavoured to prevail with her to alter the resolution she had taken. When he was unable to gain his point he flung himself across the door, when "the holy widow stepped over his body!" Her father died the following year. Only just imagine what that terrible force must be which is sufficient to procure the unnatural disservice of that sacred web, so beautifully and firmly woven together by the Father of our common nature!

"In my *Virgo Μισραμος*," says Erasmus, "I hold up to reprobation those who entice young lads and girls into monasteries against their parents' wills, abusing their simplicity or superstition, and persuading them that there is no chance of salvation but in a cloister. If the world were not full of such anglers;

if countless promising minds have not been most wretchedly buried alive in such places, then I have been wrong in my reprehensions. But if ever I am forced to speak out what I feel upon this subject, I will so paint the portrait of those kidnappers, and so represent the magnitude of the evil, that every one shall confess I have not been wrong, though I have not represented them with civility, lest I should afford a handle to the wicked.”* Erasmus, whose original name was Gerhard, by his great learning and literary labours precipitated the Reformation. His talents attracted the notice and admiration of princes and cardinals, and procured for him the offer of valuable preferments, which he however invariably rejected, while his sarcastic exposure of the knavery of the monks, aroused the ire of the “pious brotherhood,” and enlisted their passions and prejudices against him. Luther and himself were on terms of intimate friendship for some time. At length a disruption occurred, and to the last moments of his life Luther avowed his antipathy and spoke of Erasmus with contempt.†

* De Colloq. Util.

† *Vide* Notice of, in Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 569. (Soames.)

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Monasticism likewise condemns as pernicious and criminal the natural affection that should subsist between children and parents, brothers, sisters and relatives. "The religious," says Liguori, "who tells her parents, and her brothers, and her sisters, that she knows them not, is the true spouse of Christ."* Again: "The nun who leaves her relatives in effect, and in *affection*, shall obtain eternal beatitude in heaven."† "Piety towards relatives is impiety towards God," says Jerome.‡ Besides Liguori gives the following instructions to the religious: "Never seek a visit from your relatives, but when they come, withdraw from them as soon as possible; and excuse your withdrawal by saying that you must attend to the duties of your office; that you must assist a person that is sick, or by some similar apology Should your relatives complain of your unwillingness to serve them, should they even charge you with disaffection, with ingratitude, and even call you the enemy of your family, answer them with firmness that

* The Nun Sanctified, chap. x. (On Detachment from Relatives.)

† Ibid.

‡ Epist. 28, ad Paulum. (Quoted by Liguori.)

you are dead to the world, and that it is your duty to attend only to the service of God and the monastery.”* I am inclined to believe that those fond parents and affectionate brothers and sisters who have, or desire to have, members of their families in the cloister, are little aware of the unnatural and cruel exactions which that system demands from them. My God! the very thought makes one shudder!

But as all natural attachment is thus peremptorily proscribed and denounced, surely mutual affection, one would imagine, between the inmates of religious houses of the same sex, must be encouraged. Alas! no. That too is regarded in as distorted and sinful a light as the other. Hear the most authoritative writer on the subject:—“The heart of a religious must be an enclosed garden excluding every affection which is not for God.”† Again, St. Basil says: “Avoid familiarity with your equals: how many young persons have the devil, through their companions, drawn into hell to be burned with eternal fire.”‡

* The Nun Sanctified, ch. x. sec. i., etc.

† Ibid. sec. ii.

‡ Serm. de Abdic. rer. etc. (Quoted by Liguori.)

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This Father, we are told, "prescribed a very severe chastisement for the nuns of his order who should entertain particular friendships."* These St. Bernard characterises as "poisoned attachments."†

It is quite reasonable to suppose that monastics, who by virtue of their profession are necessarily obliged to regard all human affection as criminal, can possess little, if indeed any sentiment of love or even sympathy for each other. I am in possession of various facts which bear me out in these remarks, but shall content myself by merely relating a few out of many examples.

On particular occasions most religious orders have their "gala days," or seasons of festivity, when the ordinary discipline of the monastery is suspended, and when the community indulge to some degree in the pleasures of the table. On one of these occasions there happened to be in the monastery a young professed monk who was suffering from a painful disease, and actually in a state of mental aberration. Amidst the sprightliness, wit, and joviality of the refectory, the agonizing groans of the sufferer, issuing from his solitary cell,

* The Nun Sanctified, chap. x. sec. 11. † Ibid.

would reverberate, with horrible sound, around the festive board; yet callous-hearted men could not be induced to put off good cheer, but were content to observe the worldly maxim, "eat, drink, and be merry," regardless of the cries of a wretched brother. They may, forsooth, give expression now and again to a word of sympathy, and such an exclamation as "Poor fellow!" may be extorted from them; but groans sufficient to rend the heart and call forth tears of compassion from the most unrelenting, were not sufficient to force the goblet from their lips, or to cast even a shade of sorrow upon a single countenance present. This is by no means an overdrawn picture.

I have likewise known a novice to be left without attendance or nourishment for several hours together, although he lay in languishment upon a bed of sickness, exhausted from loss of blood occasioned by the frequent application of leeches. His disease too was of such a peculiar nature—I believe induced by the state of life he had but recently adopted—that it was considered likely to terminate fatally. After the lapse of many hours, the deputy-superior entered his cell, and with cold unconcern, observed: "O brother! I be-

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lieve we have forgotten to send you any refreshment to-day." I was present on the occasion, engaged in applying a moistened sponge to the wounds made by the leeches, and am positive as to the circumstance. It is no uncommon practice for the novices to be dealt with in this manner.

But this very neglect is part of the discipline through which monastics have to pass. Liguori in his instructions to the sick religious observes :—" It is not enough that you are contented with what is given to you, and do not seek what through the negligence of the dispensers you have failed to receive, which would be a great fault, but you must be ready occasionally to suffer from the want of those things which the rule allows. You will sometimes have a deficiency of clothes, bed-covering, clean linen, and food ; and you must rest quite contented with the little you have received, *without making complaint or disturbance*, even though they should seem necessary."* Again, treating of patience under infirmity and neglect, and condemning those who express complaint thereat, he remarks :—" Another may say, ' But where

* Instructions on the Religious State, II.

has charity gone ! Behold how my very sisters forget me, and abandon me on the bed of sickness.' I pity you ; not on account of your bodily infirmities, but because of your want of patience under them, which makes you doubly sick in body and soul. The *sisters forget you* : but you have *forgotten Jesus Christ*,"*—that is, by giving way to complaint. I deem these extracts from an authoritative quarter very important, as they prove that the very inhumanities I have described are not merely accidents but results, and form part and parcel of the heterogeneous system to which monks and nuns are alike subjected.

The monastic life is a state of the severest bondage, as it rivets its weighty and galling yoke upon the minds and bodies of its victims ; whilst by enjoining a *blind* submission to the dictates of a superior, it renders the exercise of thought and reason superfluous and criminal. Rational and innocent amusements are prohibited as inconsistent with a religious profession ; and therefore the youngest postulant is compelled to assume the slow and studied gravity of the oldest

* The Nun Sanctified, chap. xiii. sec. 1.

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professed religious in the community. Hence arise, from undue restraint, incalculable moral as well as physical evils. An eminent writer,* alluding to the fatal consequences which invariably result from the prohibition of innocent amusements, thus observes:—“People should be guarded against temptation to unlawful pleasures by furnishing them with the means of innocent ones. In every community there should be pleasures, relaxations, and means of agreeable excitement; for if innocent ones be not furnished, resort will be had to criminal. Man was made to enjoy as well as to labour, and the state of society should be adapted to this principle of human nature.” Here are enunciated some sound philosophical views with reference to social polity, which I am glad to find our rulers, as well as others, are beginning to recognize and even practically adopt.

Monastic discipline gradually works upon the individual until it changes his nature. At first it possesses the insidious power of an opiate which lulls the soul into a comatic state. It destroys will and produces moral

* Dr. Channing.

and mental annihilation. It is an unchristian suicide,* worthy of the execration of every philanthropist. Even by the laws of this realm monastics are considered to be *dead* in effect. The means which bring about this singular transformation are simple. "The weaker they are," observes Michelet, "the less they are suspected, and for this cause they are strong. Iron clashes against the rock, is blunted, and loses its edge and point. But who would distrust water? Weak, colourless, insipid as it is, if however it always continues to fall in the same place it will in time hollow out the flinty rock."† The power I speak of is *Obedience*.

"In coming to the Visitation," said Jane Frances de Chantal to her nuns, "you must disunite yourselves from yourselves. You must suffer your hearts to be mortified, pared, and bent, as is thought expedient by obedience, and an entire resignation of yourselves into the hands of those that direct you with perfect simplicity." Obedience is made the *alpha* and the *omega* of monastic discipline.

* Loyola on his death-bed enjoined every member of his order to be in the hands of his superior just *like a dead body*.

† Priests, Women, and Families.

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According to Liguori, and other theologians, even when it is doubtful whether the command of the superior is contrary to the divine law, the religious is bound to obey, and so far from sinning thereby, he pleases God.* He likewise treats at length upon the four degrees of perfect obedience, viz., promptness, exactness, cheerfulness, and simplicity. He also quotes the following stories for the encouragement of those religious whose standard of spiritual obedience is not quite up to the mark:—"To try the obedience of some of his monks who were confined to bed by sickness, St. Columban commanded them to rise, and go to the barn to thrash corn. As many as were filled with the true spirit of obedience instantly arose, and were suddenly restored to health. The others, because they were weak in spirit as well as in body remained in bed and continued in their infirmities."† Again, "Blessed Juniper, while employed in planting a tree in the garden, was called by St. Francis. The brother did not obey the call immediately,

* The Nun Sanctified, chap. vii. sect. iii.

† P. Plat. de bono. Strat. rel. lib. ii. cap. 5.—Ibid. cap. vii. sec. v.

but waited till he had finished the work in which he was engaged. The saint, to show him the fault he had committed by the tardiness of his obedience, cursed the tree, and, on the part of God, commanded it to grow no longer. The tree *obeyed*, and never increased in size. The narrator of this fact states, that when he wrote his annals, the tree was preserved in the convent of the city of Carniola, that it remained green, but was as small as when it was planted." *

Rodriguez, taking up the like theme, draws powerfully on his imagination for the edification of those who by their vows have made a perfect abnegation of their will :—" There was once," he tells us, " a good religious employed in copying out some written paper ; he was no sooner set to it and had made only one letter, but the clock struck ; to comply with the call of obedience he left it in that manner, and when he returned, found it all written in letters of gold !" †

Molinos also, touching upon the same key-note, says,—“ To act is the deed of the

* Wadding. *Annal. Min. an. 1222. n. xi.* (Quoted by Liguori.)

† Exercício, de Perfec. (De la Obediencià.)

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novice ; to suffer is immediate gain ; to die is perfection. Let us go forward in darkness (*blind* obedience) and we shall go well. The horse that goes round blindfolded grinds corn so much the better. Let us neither think nor read. A practical master will tell us better than any book, what we must do at the very moment. It is a great security to have an experienced guide to govern and direct us according to his actual intelligence, and prevent our being deceived by the demon of our own senses."* O, terrible effect of spiritual obedience ! For the body to die, and be put in the ground ; be trodden under foot ; become foul, and suffer the ordeal of corruption, until rottenness turn to dust and ashes, leaving nothing behind to testify that it ever had existence, is nothing,—verily *nothing* ! But for the soul itself to moulder within the living tomb that encases it, *this* is of all deaths, the most definitive and deadly. "O horrible ! O horrible ! most horrible !"

But it may be asked, what is there decidedly pernicious in the monastic system now-a-days, as monks and nuns do not adopt the rigid discipline of the ancient recluses. I answer, first of all, *Solitude*.

* Guida Spirituale.

Very few minds are formed capable of resisting such a formidable influence as this. And hence the adoption of solitary confinement by our civil rulers as a mode of punishment to which the most hardened culprit must become amenable. Think you, is it nothing to pass your existence away in a reverie ; to have your lips hermetically sealed ; your affections dead within your bosom ; and no will that you can call your own ; although "Man is man by virtue of willing."* "To be alone," as Michelet says, "and not alone ; forlorn and yet watched. Alone in a solitude without tranquillity of mind, and without repose. How sweet in comparison with this would be the solitude of the woods ! The trees would have compassion ; they are not so insensible as they seem ; they hear and they listen."† There is no solitude so truly overwhelming as that of the cloister. It is felt the more intensely from proximity to the busy world without ; and like most other things becomes heightened by contrast. Monastics who pass long and beautiful years beneath this deadly Upas shade come at length to lose both

* Emerson's Representative Men.

† Priests, Women, and Families.

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physical and mental perceptions and even sensations of pleasure. Isolated as those flowers which bloom in the Alpine regions, where no sun-ray ever penetrates and no human eye obtrudes, and which seem to accuse Nature of having neither plan nor pity in her creation ; they remain melancholy memorials of heathen ignorance and the destructive fanaticism of past ages, which the light of human progress and modern civilization has been unable to reach. Fitly does Molière make *Célimène* say in refusing to follow the gloomy *Alceste* :—

“ La solitude effraie une âme de vingt ans :

Je ne sens point la mienne assez grande, assez forte,
Pour me résoudre à prendre un dessein de la forte.”*

Dr. Andrew Combe treating of the evils consequent upon solitude thus observes : “ If we shun the society of our fellow-creatures and shrink from taking a share in the active duties of life, mental indolence and physical debility beset our path. But if by engaging in the business of life, and taking an active interest in the advancement of society, we daily exercise our powers of perception, thought, and feeling, we promote the health of the whole corporeal system, invigorate the

* The “ Misanthrope.”

mind itself, and at the same time experience the highest mental gratification of which a human being is susceptible—that of having fulfilled the end and object of our duties to God, to our fellow-men, and to ourselves. If we neglect our faculties, or deprive them of their objects, we weaken the organization, give rise to distressing diseases, and at the same time experience the bitterest feelings that can afflict human nature, *ennui* and melancholy. The harmony thus shown to exist between the moral and physical world is but another example of the numerous inducements to that right conduct and activity, in pursuing which the Creator has evidently destined us to find terrestrial happiness.”* Even upon the very deaf and dumb solitude exercises a most injurious effect; and cases are recorded by Andral,† which place the matter beyond dispute. Pinel likewise mentions an instance which strikingly exemplifies the dire consequences of suddenly removing from society and entering upon seclusion.‡

Mr. Charles Dickens, alluding to the foli-

* Constitution of Man.

† Dictionnaire de Med. et de Chirurg. Pratiques.

‡ Traité medico-philosoph. sur l'Aliénation Mentale.

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tary prison of Philadelphia, employs language which is equally applicable to every convent in the land. He observes :—"I am convinced that there is a depth of terrible endurance there which none but the sufferers themselves can fathom My firm conviction is that independent of the mental anguish it occasions—an anguish so acute and so tremendous that all imagination of it must fall short of the reality—it wears the mind into a morbid state There are many instances on record of men who have chosen, or have been condemned to lives of perfect solitude, but I scarcely remember one even among sages of strong and vigorous intellect, where its effect has not become apparent in some disordered train of thought or some gloomy hallucination. What monstrous phantoms, bred of despondency and doubt, and born and reared in solitude, have stalked the earth, making creation ugly, and darkening the face of heaven !"*

I for one see no distinction between convents and such prisons as Mr. Dickens complains of ; and I doubt not but that the discipline of the latter is far more lax, and less

* Notes on America.

reprehensible. Theological writers, not satisfied with the seclusion of the cloister, justify, nay, even recommend, close confinement. Hear Liguori: "Would to God," he exclaims, "that in all monasteries there were grates of punched iron, such as we find in some observant convents."* Then he continues: "A certain author relates, that the superiours of a monastery procured a close grate; but the devil, through rage, first bent it, and afterwards sent it rolling through the house. The good superiours placed it, crooked as it was, in the parlour, to give the nuns to understand, that as the grate was hateful to hell so it was pleasing to God. Oh! what an awful account shall the abbesses have to give to God who introduces open grates. St. Theresa wrote this great sentence: 'A monastery of nuns, in which there is liberty serves to conduct them to hell!'"† Is it any wonder that the poor woman into whose hands such a book of instructions is placed, should have within her a feeling which, sweeping over heart and brain like a fire-flood, tells her that she is a *prisoner* in her cloister and

* The Nun Sanctified, chap. xvi. sec. 1. † Ibid.

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a *slave* to her superior, irremediably bound as Maffinger's *Hortensio* :—

“ I am subject to another's will, and can
Nor speak nor do without *permission* from her !”

The recluse naturally and inevitably is a morbid-minded, misanthropic, imbecile creature ; nay, he is even an ignoble and contemptible creature, for he views with jaundiced eye and prejudiced feelings, Nature and her wondrous beauties, and makes his purely subjective mind the miserable standard of virtue and pietism. His mental and physical perceptions are diseased, distorted, dismal ; so that he cannot observe with pleasurable emotions what delights other men—like the unhappy foundling of whom we read, who in gazing upon the loveliest flower could only pay attention to the tiny “ black beetle” that crawled over it, and which pitiable perversity marred the enjoyment derivable from the sight of flowers ever after.

Another *moral* evil of monasticism, not a whit less objectionable than that I have just described, is *Celibacy*.

The celibate state is imperatively essential to this strange and unnatural condition. Hence every “ religious” at his or her pro-

fession vows a life of perpetual chastity. Thus a kind of artificial existence,—a *sexless sex*, in fact,—is created which mars by its deformity the beauty of God's handy-work, and opposes that "Order" which "is Heaven's first law." The true philosophical idea of man is a duality of persons. Man and woman first constituted it, and both are still necessary not only to the succession but to the perfection of the race. The individual who does not virtually deny his manhood, must feel conscious that he is merely a component part of the great whole, needing another part to complete the perfect being. Woman is essential to the refinement, enjoyment, purification, as well as the moral and social developement, of the opposite sex. Not less necessary is the society of man to the woman. Each acts upon the other with most salutary effect, in obedience to that powerful law of sympathy which Nature planted in the human heart, for the best and wisest of purposes. Where this principle is discarded, from whatever motive, we find that Nature herself becomes her own Nemesis to avenge the violation of her decrees; though in what precise manner it is needless to particularise. To the mawkish, profane

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pietism of monkery, the sacrament* of marriage is an unholy thing; for the natural principle of marriage, which is the love of the sexes, is excluded from heaven. Why, Hindoo fanaticism never attained to such a pitch of folly, shall I say *impiety*, as this. According to that system no man could assume the office of a Sanyassi, or hermit absorbed in God, if he had not previously fulfilled certain obligations, one of which was, that he had a legitimate son. It was reserved for monasticism to pronounce it the highest and holiest act of religion when virginity should offer itself at its altars, and when the *connubial* should be sacrificed to the *divine love*! The schoolmen had rendered love to God as a personal Being, a literal, strict, personal, exclusive love; consequently for the devout soul to cherish any other, was regarded as a heinous sin—in fine, as adultery; and entirely incompatible with the transcendental beatitudes of the Gospel. “*Perfectum autem esse nolle delinquere est*,” says St. Jerome. “How,” asks St. Clement, “can I divide my heart between God and man; how can an earthly wife

* This term is not employed in a *theological* sense.

have a place in my heaven-filled breast?" "Thy beloved," writes à Kempis, "has this quality, that he will suffer no rival; he *alone* will have thy heart, will rule *alone* in thy soul as a king on his throne. Thou canst not serve God, and at the same time have thy joys in earthly things; thou must wean thyself from all acquaintances and friends, and sever thy soul from all temporal consolation." "Ye wish," says Tauler, "to have both God and the creature together, and that is impossible. Joy in God and joy in the creature cannot exist together." "Jesus," says St. Jerome, in his Epistle to Eustochia, "is a jealous spouse: he is unwilling that *your face be seen by others*."* "Jesus has placed," says St. Agnes, "a seal on my forehead, that I admit no *lover* but him."† "A religious," writes Liguori, "on the day of her profession is espoused to Jesus Christ; for in the ceremony of profession, the bishop says to the novice about to be professed: '*I espouse thee to Jesus Christ; may he preserve thee inviolate. Receive then as his spouse, the ring of faith.*'"‡ "As first fruits are the most delicious," says

* Liguori's True Spouse of Christ, chap. i.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

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cardinal Hugo, "so virgins consecrated to God, are most pleasing and dear to him." "Virginity," says St. Cyprian, "is the queen of all virtues, and the possession of every good."* Tertullian, Ambrose, and others, favour this supernaturalism, and recognize the sacred rite of marriage more in the light of a necessary evil than an abiding good; and merely sanction it, not in order to sanctify but to restrict the flesh; to repress; to kill it. In fine, to drive Beelzebub out by Beelzebub. Even Luther was not proof against the force of early training and prejudice; for although he certainly married a nun, yet his writings favour of attachment to that very principle which his own connubial act condemned. "Chastity," he remarks, "is a nobler gift than marriage!" *Mirabile dictu!* Hence it will appear that immaculate virginity is the Diana of monasticism and its hyperphysical eulogists and abettors, to whom the language of Akenfide may fitly be applied:—

"Thou, alas!

Dost thou aspire to judge between the Lord
Of Nature and his works? to lift thy voice
Against the sovereign order he decreed,

* S. Cyp. de Virgin. (Quoted by Liguori.) Ibid.

All good and lovely ? to blaspheme the bands
 Of tenderness innate and social love,
 Holiest of things ! by which the general orb
 Of being as by adamantine links,
 Was drawn to perfect union and sustain'd
 From everlasting ?”*

Not content, however, with fulsome adulations of the celibate state, some writers, to beget in the minds of their simple readers a desire for such a life, represent the marriage union as an evil to be carefully avoided, and as almost certain to produce disastrous consequences both in time and eternity. St. Ambrose says, that “ whoever preserves the virtue of celibacy is an angel ; but whoever violates it is a *demon* ! ” † “ For a married woman to become a saint,” observes Liguori, “ it is necessary that she be perfectly free from the *control* and *tyranny* of human ties ! ” ‡ He then paints in vivid colours the consequences of wedlock ; condemns as hindrances to communion with Deity the holy and indispensable obligations of the wife and mother ; and even condescends to indelicate particulars, such as the pains and perils of parturition. “ Oh ! how un-

* The Pleasures of Imagination, book ii.

† Lit. de Offic. (Quoted by Liguori.) Vide The True Spouse of Christ, chap. i.

‡ Ibid.

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happy and miserable," he continues, "is the life of the generality of married persons ! I have known the circumstances, the feelings, and dispositions of numberless married persons, from the highest to the lowest class of society ; and how few of them were content ! The bad treatment of husbands, the disaffection of children, the wants of the family, the control of relatives, the pains of child-birth, which are always accompanied with danger of death, etc., plunge poor seculars into endless troubles and agitation, and fill their souls with continual *regret for not having been called to a happier and holier state*. God grant that, in the midst of such troubles and agitation, many of them may not lose their immortal souls, and that along with passing through *a hell in this life*, they may not be condemned to an eternity of torments in the next. Such is the condition of many of those who have engaged in the married state."* Surely such flagitious sentiments are deserving of virtuous execration ; being libels upon the purest and most exalted of conditions, and opposed to the best interests and noblest instincts of humanity.

* Ibid.

There is, I conceive, no truth more self-evident, no proposition more axiomatic, than that monasticism has a special tendency to vitiate and debase the intellectual powers, and extinguish the holiest and tenderest emotions of the heart. As with the body so with the mind. If the one be deprived of liberty, pure air, exercise, and proper nutriment, it will gradually droop and wither. If the other fails to exert its faculties, or if those faculties become diverted from their legitimate channel, premature decay is likewise inevitable. Now I know of nothing more calculated to oppress and crush the mind, to demoralize and seriously injure its delicate organization, than the system of which I speak. Monasticism strives to reform what Nature has formed; to perfect what Nature has left imperfect; and in order that men may escape judicial suffering in eternity, it imposes a voluntary suffering in time. After all, it is but a selfish system, based upon a mere arithmetical question of profit and loss. For its own benefit it would strike a bargain with God!

Man is a dual formation of body and mind, while each faculty has duties peculiarly appertaining to itself. He certainly was not designed

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to fly, for he has legs to walk; nor can he safely supply the cravings of one nature to the neglect of those of the other. The mind cannot always remain on the stretch. Indeed, the attempt to keep it so would be most hazardous. If the bow be not occasionally unstrung it will be sure not to shoot well. Monasticism, by almost entirely abolishing, or at least greatly restricting, the use of rational enjoyment, and by keeping the mind screwed up to an unnecessary and unnatural point of tension, produces untold moral evils. A disruption must necessarily ensue. And although the fatal and inevitable effects of such restraint attract little attention, and still less observation; although no secular eye dares penetrate the thick walls which shut out the world, and therefore cannot take cognisance of passing events within; nevertheless, the evil is not the less real or appalling, and should not the less be discountenanced and discouraged by every one who possesses an ordinary share of sympathy for the sufferings and sorrows of his fellow-man,—already, Heaven knows! numerous enough without their being increased by artificial means.

Few but those who are practically ac-

quainted with the system of monachism can form anything like a correct idea of the extent to which its rigid requirements are carried out. The refinement of its tortures has no parallel. Free interchange of thought and feeling is prohibited. Family and friends must be renounced. Every written communication has first of all to be submitted to the *espionage* of the superior. The least sensual indulgence, such as laughter, is proscribed and denounced as sinful. The religious must have no will, no want, no desire. They are restricted in talking, walking, sitting, standing, sleeping, eating, seeing, hearing, smelling, and feeling.* These poor solitaries

* Modesty requires that after speaking as much as will be necessary for the ends of the recreation, you show a stronger inclination to listen than to speak. Speak always in a low tone . . . Your walk must be grave; neither too quick, nor too slow . . . A religious must practise modesty in sitting . . . She must avoid every slothful posture, and must abstain from crossing the feet, and from putting one leg on the other . . . She must at meals take her food without avidity . . . A religious in general should keep the eyes cast down . . . To mortify the smell you must abstain from the use of perfumes, and scented waters . . . The sense of touch must be kept under the greatest restraint by external mortifications, such as fasts, hair-cloths, disciplines and watchings."—*Liguori's True Spouse of Christ*, chap. viii. secs. 1—iii.

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cannot, when in the garden, even freely pluck fruit, or inhale the fragrance of flowers. Nature may indeed smile, but not for them.

In Tilliard's *Memoire*, there occurs this note of Sister Mary Lemonnier :—" My confessor," she observes, " forbade me to gather flowers and to draw. Unfortunately, walking in the garden with the nuns, there were on the edge of the grass two wild poppies, which, without any intention, I lopped between my fingers in passing. One of the sisters saw me, and ran to inform the superiours who was in front, and who directly came towards me, made me open my hand ; and, seeing the poppies, told me that I had done for myself. And the confessor having come the same evening, she accused me before him of disobedience in having gathered flowers. It was in vain that I told him that it was done unintentionally, and that they were only wild poppies ! I could not obtain permission to confess myself."

III. Monasticism is pernicious in a *physical* sense.

Would that I were enabled to illustrate this fact by other than a descriptive character—that I could throw open the doors of conventual cells, and array before the reader's

view their dejected and miserable occupants. How the blanched, melancholy, and care-worn visage, would affect and call forth the tenderest feelings of commiseration for the unhappy victims of a superstition, which demands the twofold sacrifice of mind and body upon its unhallowed altars ! *Here* would be observed the young man, whose health is gradually and imperceptibly declining,—evidently the subject of consuming grief,—who, were he but in possession of rational notions of religion, would, probably, be both an ornament and a blessing to that society which he now practically disavows. And *there* would be discovered the delicate and tender maiden, who, ere scarce two summers' suns had passed, was

“Like the lily,
That once was mistress of the field, and flourished,”

whose eyes sparkled with joyous life, and upon whose countenance health of body and serenity of mind were depicted ; now, alas ! become the prey of the fell destroyer. No longer do the tinted cheek or the clear, calm eye betoken a soul at peace, or a favourable condition of the physical powers. These are changed now. Nothing now presents itself

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but the wan and dejected countenance—sad but sure omens of extreme mental and bodily prostration. And although there might be discerned in some an apparent cheerfulness of manner, it is but an affectation of the reality—the poor, hollow, miserable counterfeited of genuine contentment. For I have not the slightest hesitation in affirming, that the deluded inmates of the cloister are positively under strict obligation to conceal, even from each other, the real emotions of their hearts—thus being driven to a make-believe that they possess spiritual joy and peace, by the forced assumption of a demeanour anything but in keeping with the wretchedness of their true condition; which literally verifies the words of the dramatist :*—

“ Le plus souvent l'apparence deçoit ;
Il ne faut pas toujours juger sur ce qu'on voit.”

If the monastic life be really a state calculated to afford happiness to those who embrace it, then I must have had ample opportunities for observing its salutary influences. The fact is otherwise. And hence monastics are placed under decided obligation to *assume* a

* Molière—*Madame Pernelle* in *Tartuffe*.

demeanour, which any one who has had the slightest experience well knows is not consistent with the spontaneous emotions of the mind.*

In drawing this picture, it was not at all necessary to heighten it by too lively a colouring. If there exists any fault, it lies in the tints not being sufficiently vivid; for none but those who have been behind the scenes can tell what weight of woe those experience who are immured in convent prisons.

“What ages of what agonies may low’r
O’er one bruised human heart, in one brief hour,”

are peculiarly their lot to feel with all the intensity that remorse can give. We have an instance in the writings of Cassian, where he describes, from personal experience, the “*acedia*,” or listlessness of mind and body, to which such persons were exposed when they sighed to find themselves alone. I have myself known a person of considerable standing in the monastery, who, during the few days preceding the renewal of his vows,

* St. Jane Chantal used to say, “When I am among our young religious I laugh in order to encourage them to enjoy the recreation, for this is necessary.”—*Liguori’s True Spouse of Christ*.

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exclaimed in presence of his brethren,—“ O how sweet is *liberty!*” I greatly fear that many who are bound to their solitary cloisters give, but in vain, simular ejaculations, and pine beneath the blighting influences of corroding grief :—

“ ’Tis better to be lowly born,
And range with humble livers in content,
Than to be perk’d up in a glistering grief,
And wear a golden forrow.”

Destruction of the body is one of the principles upon which monasticism is based. “ If you desire to live in this house,” said St. Bernard the abbot, to those who presented themselves for admission at the monastery of Clairvaux, “ you must *leave your body*. Only *spirits* enter here !” The entire system tends to self-abnegation, self-renunciation, self-immolation. Its trifling, insipid ceremonies ; its harassing and incessant occupations ; its idle and empty routine of monotonous duties—all tend to excite the mind and produce depressing passions. These again react upon the physical constitution, and engender diseases of a serious type. “ Nothing,” observes a celebrated writer,* “ is more clearly settled

* Mr. Draper.

by experience, than that grief acts as a slow poison, not only in the immediate infliction of pain, but in gradually impairing the powers of life, and in subtracting from the sum of our days. I am confident that the far greater portion of human suffering is of our own procuring—the result of ignorance and mistaken views.” Another eminent writer,* treating of this subject, remarks :—“ No one can imagine what a vast number of diseases, not only functional, but organic, arise simply from unpleasing passions of the mind.” And Luther, describing the melancholy and dejection to which he when a monk was subjected, observes : “ Solitude and melancholy are poison. They are deadly to all ; but above all to the young.”

In confirmation of the moral and physical evils consequent upon monasticism, I shall submit a few confessions from the lips of those who could individually say,—“ *Quorum pars magna fui.*” In the Letters of Madame de Chantal, curtailed and interpolated though the priests have rendered them, yet we discover therein quite sufficient to convey clearly the genuine sentiments of her heart.

* Dr. John Elliotson, F.R.S., etc.

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She writes : " All that I have suffered during the whole course of my life is not to be compared to the torments I now feel. I am reduced to such a degree that nothing can satisfy me or give me any relief except one word—*Death!*" Even Alban Butler admits, " that exterior trials, (alluding to the death of near relations) however severe, were light in comparison of the interior anguish, darkness, and spiritual dryness, which she sometimes experienced for a considerable time." Poor woman ! I grow sad when I think of her. Before she became an abbess she addressed a letter (now extant) to her director Francis de Sales, in which she observes : " There is something within me that has never been satisfied." This woman had within her heart depths of unknown passion. But hush ! I dare not go further. There is enough methinks in her history to make even a dead man weep !—

" Oh that my heart was quiet as a grave,
Asleep in moonlight !
For as a torrid sunset boils with gold
Up to the zenith, fierce within my soul
A passion burns from basement to the cope."

I shall next allude to the monk, Bernard,
whose mortification of his senses was such

that when twelve months in the novitiate he did not know whether the top of his cell was covered with a ceiling, nor whether the church had more than one window, though it had three. "His face," says his biographer, "was emaciated and exceeding pale and wan, and his whole body bore visible marks of his austere and penitential life. . . . He almost always laboured under some corporeal infirmity, and his stomach, through a habit of excessive fasting, was scarce ever able to bear any solid food. . . . He often made a scruple of taking herb pottage in which a little oil and honey were mixed. When one expressed his surprise at his making such a difficulty, he answered: 'Did you know how great the obligation of a monk is, you would not eat one morsel of bread without having first watered it with your tears.' He used to say, 'Our fathers built their monasteries in damp unwholesome places, that the monks might have the uncertainty of life more sensibly before their eyes.' St. Bernard seemed to set no bounds to the austerities which he practised. William of St. Thierry says, that he went to his meals as to a torment, and that the sight of food seemed often his whole refecton. His

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watchings were incredible. He seemed by his mortifications to have brought upon himself a dangerous distemper, and his life was almost despaired of.”* A good monk, truly ! “ the prodigy and wonder of the eleventh age ! ” † Surely, such an one must have been very *happy* indeed—happy in his solitude, and in the scrupulously exact fulfilment of his rules and vows. But *was* he happy ? Let us hear what he himself says on this important subject. And oh ! that all young people now being beguiled by interested partizans, who paint in glowing colours to their fervid imaginations and confiding hearts, the fugitive happiness of the cloister, would but ponder on the melancholy confession, and profit by the experience, of a fainted monastic. Bernard writes :—“ I am seized all over with horror, dread, and trembling, whenever I repeat within myself that sentence, ‘ Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred. ’ ” ‡ And again, addressing some of his brethren, he observes : “ My monstrous life and my afflicted con-

* *Lives of the Saints*, vol. viii. (S. Bernard, A.)

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Serm. xxviii. in Cant. Totus inhorruui, etc.*

science cry towards you for compaffion ; for I am a kind of amphibious creature, that neither lives as an ecclefiaftic nor as a reclufe. When you have learned my danger favour me with your advice and prayers.”*

I fhall not ftop here to difcufs the very heinous offence of which Bernard was guilty, by injuring his health in the way that Alban Butler teftifies. Life being the property of God, and man having only a right ufe of it, we may fairly conclude that it is fuicidal to do aught that is abfolutely unlawful either to injure or deftroy the divine right of property in it—a moral doctrine even acknowledged by Socrates, juft before he imbibed the fatal cup.†

Luther, in describing his perfonal experience as a monk and the refults of his long and clofe obfervation, obferves :—“ What I here fay I have learned by my own expe-

* Epift. 250.

† Man feems to be one of thofe beings in which the gods have referved to themfelves a proprietary, and therefore, as a mafter would be angry with his flave if he fhould injure his life without his leave, and would punifh him for fo doing, fo it is reasonable to think that no man ought to do aught prejudicial to his exiftence, unlefs God lays him under a neceffity of killing himfelf, as he now does me.—*Plat. in Pbæd.* p. 62. Ed. Serrani.

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rience, and that of others, in the monastery. I have seen many who, with the utmost diligence and scrupulosity, have omitted nothing which might pacify conscience; have worn haircloth, fasted, prayed, afflicted, and exhausted their bodies by various severities; so that, even if they had been made of iron, they must at length have been destroyed. Yet the more they laboured, the more fearful they became. And especially as the hour of death drew nigh, they were so full of trepidation, that I have seen many murderers condemned for their crimes meet death with more confidence than these persons who had lived so strictly.”* And in an epistle to George, Duke of Saxony, Luther says:—“Truly I was a pious monk, and followed the rules of my order more strictly than I can tell. If ever monk had got to heaven by monkery, I had been that monk. In this all the monks of my acquaintance will bear me witness. Had the thing continued much longer I had become a martyr unto death, through vigils, prayer, reading, and other labours.”†

Luther's account of himself is fully borne

* Comment. on Galatians.

† Luth. Op. w. xix.

out by the historian, D'Aubigné, who states, "that the young monk studied so closely and ardently that he often omitted to say his office during two or three weeks. Then becoming alarmed at the thought of having transgressed the rules of his order, he shut himself up to make amends for his negligence, and commenced conscientiously repeating all the omitted hours, without thinking of meat or drink. On one occasion his sleep went from him for seven weeks."*

Sir Bulwer Lytton, alluding to the unfortunate wife of Henry IV., (Mary de Medicis) who sought peace for her tortured spirit in the tranquillity of the cloister, thus pathetically observes :—"Alas, the cell and the convent are but a vain emblem of that desire to fly to God which belongs to distress; the solitude soothes, but the monotony recalls regret. And for my own part I never saw, in my frequent tours through catholic countries, the still walls in which monastic vanity hoped to shut out the world, but a melancholy came over me. What hearts at war with themselves!—what unceasing regrets!—what pining after the past!—what long and beau-

* Hist. Reform. book ii. ch. 3, vol. i.

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tiful years devoted to a moral grave, by a momentary rashness, an impulse, a *disappointment!*”*

Michelet also gives a very affecting picture of the physical evils resulting from monasticism. He writes:—“Fifteen years ago, I occupied in a very solitary part of the town, a house, the garden of which was adjacent to that of a convent of women. Though my windows overlooked the greatest part of their garden, I had never seen my sad neighbours. In the month of May, on Rogation day, I heard numerous weak, very weak voices chanting prayers, as the procession passed through the convent-garden. The singing was sad, dry, unpleasant; their voices false, as if spoiled by sufferings! I thought for a moment they were chanting prayers for the dead! but listening more attentively I distinguished, on the contrary, ‘*Te rogamus audi nos!*’—the song of hope which invokes the benediction of the God of life upon fruitful nature! This May-song, chanted by these *lifeless* nuns, offered to me a bitter contrast. To see these pale girls crawling along on the flowery, verdant turf—these poor girls, who

* Pilgrims of the Rhine.

will never bloom again ! The thought of the middle ages, that had at first flashed across my mind, soon died away ; for then monastic life was connected with a thousand other things ; but in our modern harmony what is this but a barbarous contradiction—a false, harsh, grating note. What I then beheld before me was to be defended neither by nature nor by history. I shut my window again, and sadly resumed my books. This sight had been painful to me, as it was not softened or atoned for by any poetical sentiment. It reminded me much less of chastity than of sterile widowhood—a state of emptiness, inaction, disgust—of an intellectual and moral fast—the state in which these unfortunate creatures are kept by their absolute rulers !” *

It is a striking but melancholy fact that noviciates, or convents where young persons are trained, perfectly resemble hospitals. Most of the postulants become ill after a very short time ; and I am only surprised that many more deaths do not occur in these pestilential places. Gerald Griffin, whose writings are becoming popular in this country, died

* Priests, Women, and Families.

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within the first or second year of his probatory course. Since his decease a tragedy of his, entitled *Gisippus*,* has been acted at Drury Lane Theatre, amidst the most unbounded ovations—Mr. Macready having sustained the principal character. Poor Griffin! like so many others, his fame came too late. Whilst residing in London, all the interest that himself and his friend Banim could command was insufficient to get his dramatic productions brought upon the stage. His remains lie interred in the cemetery of the convent at Cork, belonging to the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Poor fellow! sick of life, weary through “hope deferred,” and bleeding from disappointed love and ambition, he almost yielded to despair, and as a *dernier resort*, sought the cloister as the only, but ineffectual anodyne for his soul’s terrible unrest. Dr. Griffin does not hold the “Brothers” altogether free from blame in the matter of his death:† I frequently recall to mind, though with a painful melancholy of feeling, those poems of Griffin’s, wherein he too truly expresses dark forebodings of his untimely

* A Play in Five Acts. London: 1842.

† *Vide* Life of Gerald Griffin, Esq., by his Brother.

fate.* The language of the monologue which the author puts into the mouth of *Gisippus*, when—endeavouring to elude his pursuers—he enters a burying-ground and leans over a tomb, has been literally fulfilled in himself:—

“ Will the dead
Afford me what the living have denied,
Rest for my weary limbs, and shelter? Here
At least I shall find quiet, if not ease,
And host who do not grudge their entertaining
Even though the guest be misery. Colder hearts
Than those which rest within this sepulchre,
I’ve left in all the health of lusty life,
Informing bosoms harder than its marble,
Then I will be your guest, ye silent dead,
Would I could say, your fellow-slumberer !”†

Many brilliant and promising young persons, of both sexes, are thus yearly sacrificed on the altar of this modern Moloch, and are sent to rejoin in heaven those martyrs that have preceded them.

I have myself whilst in the monastery sustained conflicts which I cannot describe—mental anguish which I shudder to contemplate—perturbation of soul which baffled

* *Vide* Poems, “In the days of my boyhood.” “I am alone.” “Know you not that lovely river,” etc.—Griffin’s Poetical Works. Ed. *Parlour Library*.

† Act iv. Scene iii.

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every remedy I thought calculated to pacify it. These severe trials and this mental prostration and inward agony were, doubtless, the inevitable consequences of monastic rigour, and the continual warfare which this unnatural system wages against Nature, who will not with impunity suffer an infringement of her rights. But my ghostly father, to whom I alone dare venture to reveal them, counselled me to regard my distress of mind, disquietude of conscience, and the extreme distaste which I experienced for the profession of a monk, as the wiles of the enemy to ensnare my soul and entice me into the world, where my salvation would be jeopardised, and my anticipation of a blissful futurity rendered perhaps abortive. Accordingly, he had recourse to an opiate in order to administer relief to my burdened spirit. But it failed to be efficacious. This was by placing me under obligation to read privately, in an audible voice, the life of St. Anthony of the desert—one of the greatest fanatics the world ever produced—several times a day for weeks together, until all the singular exploits of the hermit, and his repeated physical combats with nefarious spirits, had become so impressed upon my memory, that

I could repeat by rote the life of this faintly devotee with the same facility that I could the pages of the Breviary. However, what priests and their quack nostrums could not effect for me, I, after some vigorous efforts, effected for myself. The Jesuits may easily corrupt and disquiet consciences; they cannot purify nor tranquillise them. Never shall I forget the anguish of soul I endured when one day I prostrated myself before an image of the Madonna, (whose looks beamed with light and love, after the exquisite touches of Salvator Rosa,) exclaiming, "*O Mary! I never will desert you!*" Doubt and fear reigned successively over my troubled spirit, and bowed me to the earth. I felt as did the aged captive of whom we read, who, having been confined for many years in a dungeon of the Bastile, when the glorious tidings of deliverance was announced in his ears, implored as the greatest of blessings, that he might be permitted to pass the remainder of his life in captivity. Accustomed to gloominess and slavery he envied not the children of liberty and light. He could not gaze with joyfulness upon the brilliancy of day, the greatest part of whose existence was dreamed away amid the blackness and darkness of a

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protracted night. So, when the light of reason burst upon my mind I dreaded its power. I would have preferred remaining in darkness rather than suffer the agonies of doubt and disquietude which the sun-beams of Truth occasioned. But Truth was stronger than I; and having overcome in the contest with error, I now bear the palm of victory, and thank Heaven for the ordeal through which I was enabled to pass. As Archdeacon Hare admirably remarks:—“The light must enter into the darkness, ere the darkness can know that it is without light, and open its heart to desire and embrace it.”*

IV. Monasticism is pernicious in a *political* point of view.

The interests of the State are materially and permanently injured by the abstraction of the services and properties of those who enter the cloister. Such persons are lost to the country as citizens, and pass at once from the control of the law and the protection of the constitution. It is a fatal and mischievous error to suppose that individuals have the moral right to direct their own actions in the

* Guesses at Truth.

matter of retiring from the world. Such an idea is the result of great ignorance ; and when the desire of serving God better is the ground alleged, to ignorance becomes added superstition.

The number of monastic institutions in England and Wales are considerably on the increase, as will appear from the following authentic statement: In 1847, there were thirty-four convents and eight monasteries. In 1848, there were thirty-eight convents and eleven monasteries. In 1851, the convents for women alone had increased to fifty-three. In 1852, they numbered sixty-two ; and in 1853, they were further augmented to seventy-five ; being an addition of twenty-two in two years. Well, we cannot be far wrong if we allow five more for the past year,—in all eighty. Assuming that each convent or monastery contains twenty inmates*—not by any means a high average—it would yield a total of one thousand six hundred nuns, independently of monastics of the other sex. Now, estimating that each

* Mr. T. Chambers estimates the number at thirty. *Vide* Hanford's Par. Debates, 10th of May, 1853.—*Inspection of Nunneries.*

of these women brought into the convent in the shape of dowry, say, £450—many bring ten times this amount—it would yield a capital of £720,000; and not a dead or inactive capital either; for as quickly as a religious dies out, her property becomes immediately available; so that instead of the longevity of a nun being a boon, her premature death becomes the source of pecuniary profit. Should such establishments go on increasing in the same ratio as they have during the past few years, the immense amount of capital that would accumulate therein must be highly detrimental to the state. According to Hume, the Roman court once drew a revenue from this country greater than the entire national revenue of the crown of England. If monastic establishments are quietly suffered to progress *ad libitum*, although the papal court may not derive proximate advantages therefrom, certainly this country must suffer in a monetary and commercial point of view, from the enormous amount of wealth that is sure to become accumulated in such places.

It is a very serious question, whether the state is justified in permitting the increase of convents in a free country like England; or

whether permitting them, it should not exercise a suitable vigilance and control over their inmates. Much opposition was raised both in and out of the House of Commons when Mr. Chambers brought in his motion for the Inspection of Nunneries; as if the measure was dictated by anti-catholic feeling and religious asperity—motives which that gentleman very properly disavowed. But Roman catholic countries, strange to say, have taken the initiative in this matter, and have found it necessary not only to hold a strict supervision over, but positively to limit, and occasionally to suppress, such institutes as being inimical to the safety and welfare of the various states in which they were planted. The reformed Leopold, who succeeded the last of the Medici, made a law,* suppressing some religious houses, and materially restricting others; which law likewise provided for their due inspection. It was said of Leopold that he found Tuscany a wilderness and left it a paradise. At all events he was a wise and good emperor and statesman; and his public acts are well worthy of consideration if not commendation.

* A. D. 1780.

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In Russia, no convent can receive an inmate without previously addressing the Synod at Moscow, and forwarding an affidavit of the novice, that the life she wishes to adopt is of her own free choice. In Prussia, no girl can take the veil without first undergoing an examination by the civil authorities. In Bavaria, nuns are not allowed to make other than triennial vows; and a periodical visitation of all convents is strictly enforced. In Austria, monastics have the privilege privately to address the civil government, and at any time they may deem expedient. Whilst in many French convents vows are only suffered to be taken temporarily, and the maire of the arrondissement and the authorities have power to make a visitation of them, without even giving any notice of their intention. In Sardinia, some few months ago, a bill for the Suppression of Convents was brought into the Piedmontese Chamber.* On that occasion, in concluding his speech Mr. Brofferio said:—"The minister tells us there are in Sardinia four hundred religious houses. He wishes to suppress, we

* At the very time we write, the subject is again being discussed.

will say, two hundred. I will vote for this suppression. If but fifty, I will vote for suppressing the fifty. If but ten, I will say ten. If he will only get rid of a single monk, I will say, away goes the monk! I will content myself with that; but I will wait, having faith in the future, and being persuaded that it will bring us better times and better men."

Several years ago the Abbé De La Menais published a work* in Paris, in which he speaks of the determination of the French government with respect to religious vows and monastic establishments, and animadverts upon the constituted authorities for refusing to legalize the same. The state did not prohibit individuals from taking upon themselves certain religious obligations. Its maxim was: "L'état ne s'en mêlera pas: ce sont là des choses d'un ordre plus élevé qui se passeront entre la conscience et Dieu." However, it was considered an act of wise political policy to put a very considerable restraint on conventual institutions.

Now, with these facts staring us in the face, why should it be considered derogatory

* De la Religion, considérée dans ses rapports avec l'ordre Politique et Civile.

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to the dignity of England, or an infringement on the liberty which we enjoy under the broad ægis of her free constitution, for religious houses to be amenable to the laws and open to inspection? I can see no reason why our own Government should entirely overlook the safety, happiness, and welfare of those persons immured in convents. Indeed, so far from such inspection resulting in evil, it must needs be productive of good. If it effected no further benefit than to remove the prejudices and unfavourable impressions which obtain in some quarters, respecting the government of nunneries, this alone, one would think, would be "a consummation devoutly to be wished." We know how very easy it is to despoil a virgin of her fair fame; and how busy the tongue of calumny oftentimes is; never more so than when the subject of convents comes upon the *tapis*. Now, if these places of seclusion were open to inspection, it would really serve to disabuse the public mind of certain, perhaps prejudicial and unfounded, notions of the doings and workings therein,—that is, if they are as blameless and spotless as they would have the world imagine. Some transactions, however, have recently come to light, which

rather detract from than enhance the character of such communities ; but motives of delicacy and respect for eminent families, will not allow me to revive painful and public disclosures.

It is a melancholy fact, however, that many young persons are cunningly inveigled into convents, (as nuns now inherit they become objects to be gained,) and are afterwards cruelly confined in these prisons by *compulsion*. Yet they dare not complain, for this would only serve to enhance their misery, and render their existence, already melancholy enough, one dark scene of uninterrupted gloom. Certain prelates in letters to the *Times* may quote the Council of Trent in proof of persons being anathematized who force young men and women into monasteries against their will. It is all perfectly true. But it leaves parents and guardians free to force or compel that consent, which otherwise would be withholden. Were this consent not necessary, there would be no need for the employment of violence to extort it. As it is, however, the *consent* and *content* of these poor creatures very much resemble the lamb led into catholic churches on St. Agnes' day, extended on its richly-fringed cushion,

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its ear and tail bedecked with gaudy ribands, bleating to the tones of church music, and evidently dissatisfied with the petting it receives, seeming to the ear of the satirist to cry all the while :—

“ Alack ! and alas

What’s all this white damask to daisies and grass ? ”

Liguori, so far from denying the fact of persons being *forced* into these dens of seclusion, devotes one portion of a voluminous book to the instruction of such malcontents.* As to sympathy for such, he possesses and he professes none. He observes : “ For my part, I cannot pity you more than I could pity a person who had been transported (even against his will) from a place infected with pestilence and surrounded by enemies, to a healthful country, to be placed there for life secure against every foe.”† He further remarks, to the discontented : “ Now that you are professed in a convent, and that it is *impossible for you to leave it*, tell me what do you wish to do ? If you have entered religion

* “ *What ought a person to do who finds that she has become a nun against her inclinations ?* ”—True Spouse of Christ, ch. xxiv. 8.

† Ibid. 8. sec. 3.

againſt your inclinations, you muſt now remain with cheerfulness. If you abandon yourſelf to melancholy you ſhall lead a life of miſery, and will expoſe yourſelf to great danger of ſuffering a *hell here* and another hereafter. You *muſt then make a virtue of neceſſity*. . . . Being asked his opinion regarding a perſon who had become a nun againſt her will, St. Francis de Sales answered : ‘It is true that this *child*, if ſhe had not been *obliged* by her *parents*, would not have left the world ; but this is of little importance, provided ſhe knows that the *force* employed by her parents is more uſeful to her than the permiſſion to follow her own will.’”* What need we of any further witneſs ?

After all how falſe and fatal is that ſympathy which ſays, “Leave convents alone, and leave people alone, to do juſt as they like—why heed or intermeddle ~~we~~ ?” But ſurely principle ſhould ever take precedence of private feeling. The public good muſt not be ſacrificed either for the ſake of perſonal benefit or gratification. To do ſo would be contrary to the univerſally recognised laws

* True Spouſe of Chriſt, 8. § 4.

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of sound polity and social morality. To my mind there cannot be a more contemptible, loathsome, horrifying sight, than to see numbers of young men and women fly society and shut themselves up within the barren walls of a monastery, of which the language of Byron, in his Lament of Tasso, is but too accurately descriptive :—

“ Here laughter is not mirth, nor thought the mind—
Nor speech a language ; nor e’en men mankind ! ”

—there to have every noble faculty rot in putrid isolation, and every physical grace turn to emasculated deformity. As well, and with equal propriety, may the most monstrous superstitions be imported and supported in our land, and suicide no longer rank as a crime on the Statute Book ! I thought that the boasted Freedom of this country had at least one limitation—that no individual was *free* to be a *slave*.

FINIS.

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